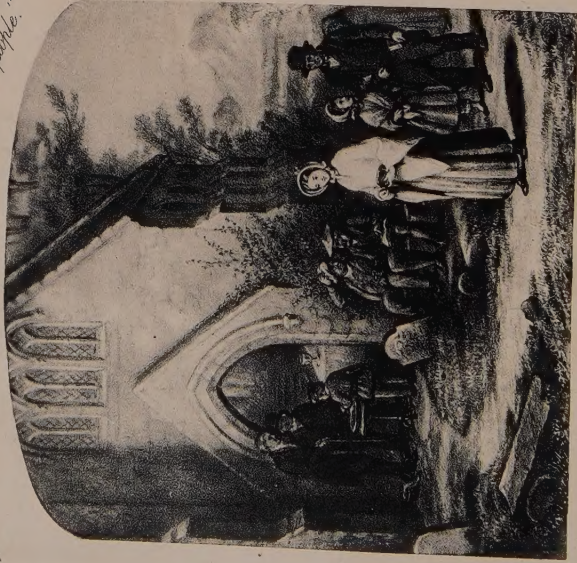


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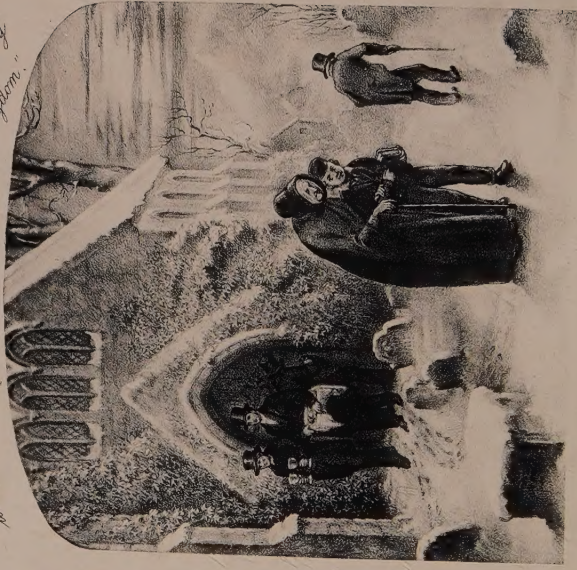
COMMUNION MEMORIES.

"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord,
I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."



THE FIRST COMMUNION.

"I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day
when I drink it now with you in my Father's kingdom."



THE LAST COMMUNION.

COMMUNION MEMORIES.

The Record of some Sacramental
Sundays :

WITH MEDITATIONS, ADDRESSES, AND PRAYERS
SUITED FOR THE LORD'S TABLE :

Including an Introduction and Historical Appendix.

BY

J. R. MACDUFF, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "MORNING AND NIGHT WATCHES," "IN CHRISTO,"
"PALMS OF ELIM," ETC. ETC.

"When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me ; for I had gone with the multitude ; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."—PSALM xlii. 4.

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MDCCCLXXXVI.

THIS ATTEMPT,
IN MORE SPECIAL RELATION TO ONE BRANCH
OF THE
CHURCH CATHOLIC,
TO MEMORIALISE
THE CENTRAL ACT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP,
IS
Dedicated to All
WHO LOVE THE LORD JESUS IN
SINCERITY AND TRUTH;
AND WHO SEEK, IN SIMPLE FAITH AND LOWLY LOVE,
TO OBEY
HIS DYING COMMAND.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”—1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

“Lampades multæ, una Lux.”

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Words of Institution.

“ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delibered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and, when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”—I CORINTHIANS xi. 23-28.

BLESSED FEAST ! most gracious token
Of Thy dying love, O Lord !
Symbol of Thy body broken,
And Thy precious blood outpoured.


May the holy rite partaking,
Help us on our pilgrim way :
Sin in every shape forsaking,
Be our vow afresh to-day.

Sacred pledge, that nought can sever,
Blessed Saviour, from Thy love ;
Sealed to be Thy guests for ever
At the better Feast above :

Where, in sweet communion blending,
With the vast ingathered throng,
Ours shall be a bliss unending,
An eternal Festal-song !

—J. R. M.

INTRODUCTORY.

HE first portion of this Volume consists of Sacramental Sermons, written and delivered at widely separated periods of ministerial life. Some were preached in a rural parish :—some to a city congregation. This will account for a somewhat marked diversity in style, although chronological sequence is not observed in their arrangement.

No memory of a twenty-eight years' ministry in the Church of Scotland is so hallowed to the writer as that of her Communion Sundays. Those in sister churches, habituated to more varied and ornate services, may possibly, in much of her ordinary sanctuary-worship, be repelled by its severe simplicity : but exception must assuredly be made in the case of the celebration of the great Sacramental rite. It may reverentially be called the "Idyll" of her ritual ;—and to those located in other homes and countries, who may no longer be privileged to share in them, they are the seasons, of all others, which linger in the mind with most devout and cherished associations ;

like a strain of music whose pathos and cadence survive, or rather are deepened and intensified, when other chords may cease to vibrate. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" The late Lord (Chancellor) Campbell thus writes to his father, an aged minister in the Church of Scotland, as he is present in thought on the first Sunday in August, 1817, in the Parish Sanctuary familiar to him from boyhood:—"From hour to hour I followed the service, through its various stages, till I thought you must have concluded your thanksgiving service in the evening. Of all the religious ceremonies I have seen or read of, I find nothing so impressive or truly grand as the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the forms of the Church of Scotland." *

It may be permitted, respectfully, to add a more remarkable and interesting verdict still:—

"At the end of the sermon began the service of the Communion, which is most touching and beautiful, and impressed and moved me more than I can ex-

* *Life of John, Lord Campbell, &c.*, edited by his daughter. 1881. How many can subscribe to the words of another eminent Scotchman:—"That poor temple of my childhood," says Thomas Carlyle, "to me more sacred at this moment than perhaps the biggest cathedral then extant could have been; rude, rustic, bare,—no temple in the world was more so;—but there were sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame from heaven, which kindled what was best in one, and what has not yet gone out."—*Carlyle's Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 86.

press. . . It would indeed be impossible to say how deeply we were impressed by the grand simplicity of the service. . . It was all so truly earnest: and no description can do justice to the perfect devotion of the whole assemblage." *

As probably to most of the eyes which fall on these pages, the Presbyterian Communion service is unfamiliar, a few prefatory sentences may not be out of place, and may tend to impart an interest to words spoken on these solemn occasions. Those for whom such explanatory remarks are unnecessary, may simply pass them over.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is dispensed in all the parishes in Scotland, generally speaking, on an average twice a year; what are known as 'the Summer and Winter Communions.' The day indeed is not remote (quite within the writer's recollection), when the rite was administered, as was the case in his own first rural parish, only once a year; and when, as a sacred *Anniversary*, it was regarded with something akin to the feeling with which the Jewish worshippers kept their great annual celebration of the Passover. As marking additionally the solemnity of the day (we speak, however, specially of the Highlands), it was by no means an infrequent custom, and within our remembrance also, for the neighbouring country

* H.M. The Queen's *More Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*, pp. 152, 155.

churches to be closed, in order to allow of their habitual worshippers repairing to the adjoining parish where the rite was to be administered. Moreover, for lack of room in the ordinary Sanctuary, a Tent was, and is at times, in many parts of Scotland, improvised out of doors, to accommodate the surplus numbers that are in the habit of assembling. When the season is at all favourable, this Tent has for its curtains nothing but the blue awning of heaven,—the dense throng surrounding. To quote from the narrative of a spectator:—"The services on Sunday were divided: those in English being conducted in the Church, and in Gaelic in a little hollow glade opening on to the sea-beach. . . . It was a very striking sight that met us on our arrival at the place of meeting. More than three thousand people sat on the ground, or on stools they had carried in their hands. In the midst of the assemblage stood the tent or wooden pulpit. This was occupied by Dr. ——. In front of the pulpit were two ridges of turf covered over with white linen. These were the Communion Tables. The day was most beautiful. The sun shone brightly, rooks cawed overhead, and the ripple of the water close by on the gravel beach mingled with the psalm: the solemn effect of the latter was indescribable." *

Similar testimonies and descriptions might be multiplied. I cannot resist adding the following from the

* See "Good Words," *April* 1881.

Life of an esteemed fellow-worker, though belonging to a different branch of the Presbyterian Church, the late Dr. Alexander Raleigh. Rehearsing his oldest recollections, his biographer remarks, "Among the memories of his boyhood, none stood out more clearly than the open-air Communion Sabbaths,—the green hillsides, the white covered tables, and the hushed interest of the hearers, who followed the preacher from point to point of his elaborate discourse. 'I go back nearly forty years,' was his own pulpit reference to one of these occasions, 'when I was so young that I could remember only this text, (*"I will not eat till I have told mine errand,"* Gen. xxiv. 33), discoursed from, on a Sacramental occasion, by a famous preacher for well nigh an hour and a half. He spoke from a tent in a green field on a clear summer day; the communion tables, covered with the linen clean and white, spread out waiting their occupants, who came to sit down at communion after the sermon was over, and during the singing of a psalm. Although the speaker spoke so long, no one seemed to weary. The sound of his voice was solemn; and the awe-struck desiring look of the people—nearly two thousand of them—seemed almost as if they expected a visit, on that day and in that place, from their Risen Lord. The whole formed a picture and a scene not likely to be forgotten.'"

Far be it from us to attempt vindicating, what strangers to Scottish usages and traditions must doubtless remark upon, the singular infrequency of

these Communion seasons. It is only right to say, that the divine words of Institution have in later years demanded and received their more natural and obligatory interpretation. But neither must the long cherished and long practised ecclesiastical custom be relegated, without explanation, amid the untenable severities of Puritan rite and dogma. Even though now to a large extent obsolete, a respectful deference is due to the opinions (some would call them prejudices) of those who clung for generations with honesty and ingenuous earnestness to the "old paths." For it cannot be denied that the restricted dispensation of the rite tended to invest its observance with a special halo of sacredness; while, on the other hand, the reverential feelings which gathered round the "once every year," are liable to be impaired by the excess of "celebrations," where the opposite sacramentarian theory is carried to an unwarrantable—in some cases, dangerous—excess.*

* The annual observance seems to have been the custom of some Christians in the East, during the fourth century. (See Appendix and note.) No better illustration of the solemnity of feeling which gathered round the *one* yearly celebration can be given, than in the words of the greatest and best known of all the Scottish clergy. The following is Dr. Chalmers' entry in his journal during his ministry in the rural parish of Kilmany in Fife:—"Let me prepare for my future Sacraments a long time before they come round; and when they do come round, give my whole strength to the examination of communicants, to the state of my own heart, and the impressive communication of my feelings at the time of delivery."—*Dr. Hanna's Life of Chalmers, in loc.*

It may, however, be here noted, in connection with the subject

Throughout Scotland, the Communion Sunday is still preceded by what is familiarly known as the "Fast Day": a day set apart, during the week, for humiliation and prayer; marked by entire cessation from ordinary secular work. Either a distant or neighbouring clergyman and friend is called in to undertake the church services. These are, or ought to be, alike in devotional exercises and sermon, appropriate to the occasion. On Saturday, though the observance is becoming less frequent, another—what is known as "the preparation service"—takes place, generally in the afternoon. Then follows "the Great day of the Feast." *

If we venture to transfer a by no means ideal picture; rather, to present a mental photograph; we may still for the moment be allowed to retain our recollection of the *annual* commemoration in a country parish.

It is summer, generally the height of summer, when the day is longest and the weather least precarious; so also as not unduly to allow the preliminary services

of more frequent observance, that in "The First Book of Discipline," the Reformers themselves contemplated the dispensation of the Communion at least once a month.

* The entire "Season of Communion"—though, alas, with some it may degenerate into formalism, yet with very many and in many places,—may be regarded as corresponding (only with a diviner authority) to the "*Mission Week*" of modern years:—a solemn occasion and opportunity for the deepening and quickening of the spiritual life.

just referred to, interfering with 'the spring work' on the one hand, or the demands of harvest on the other.

The village bell has already sounded its early summons; and long before the time for the second 'ringing' has come,—groups are seen wending their way from cottage and hamlet, through wood and valley, across mountain and glen, all converging towards the one sacred spot. Conspicuous are those who claim from their years and infirmities the privilege of a first seat at the Communion Table.

“Lull'd the sea this Sabbath morning,
Calm the golden-misted glens,
And the white clouds upward passing
Leave unveil'd the azure Bens,
Altars pure to lift to heaven
Human hearts' unheard Amens.

And the folk are flowing, flowing,
Both from near and far, enticed
By old wont, and reverent feeling,
Here to keep the hallowed tryst,
This calm Sacramental Sabbath
Far among the hills with Christ.”*

* Principal Shairp's "*Kilmahoe*." Though a very subordinate pictorial accessory, and that too relating to the mere outer framework, the primitive attire of the Scotch peasant-worshippers thirty or forty years ago will, despite of us, pleasantly obtrude itself and mingle in these older memories of the multitude that kept holiday. Very especially (what, like other things in these days of rapid transformation, are fast vanishing), the red hood, and 'suback' of the aged women. Picturesque as they were grouped on the pulpit stairs;—more so still when seated in reverent devotion at the Communion table.

In very many cases, the country churches were, and are, oblong. The "fads,"* or square seats, occupying the transverse section right in front of the pulpit are converted, for the time being, into the "Table of Communion." A white cloth is spread upon it; generally thus extending from end to end, and as many communicants as the space will admit are seated on either side. When the form of the Church does not admit of this arrangement, or when more space is required, additional pews are utilised.† Amid a hush of unwonted solemnity the service begins. Some well-known and appropriate psalm is selected, perhaps most frequently, as was the wont of the writer, the simple but beautiful metrical rendering of Ps. xliii. :—

" O send Thy light forth and Thy truth,
Let them be guides to me :
And bring me to Thine holy hill,
Even where Thy dwellings be.

* Fads, or folds, not surely an inappropriate name for the enclosures of the pastor's flock.

† It seems almost a satire to read, as follows, regarding the most pronounced and distinguished Anglican of his day, now a "Prince Prelate" of Rome :—" His own ideas of a village church were simple, almost utilitarian. So little part had he in the great ecclesiological and ritual revival, that from first to last he performed the service after the fashion of the last century. At his own church of St. Mary's was retained the custom, *said to be from Puritan times*, of handing the sacred elements to the communicants at their places down the long chancel, the desks of which, covered with white linen for the occasion, looked much like tables."—*Mozley's Reminiscences of the Oxford Movement*, vol. i. p. 345.

Then will I to God's altar go,
To God my chiefest joy :
Yea, God, my God, Thy name to praise
My harp I will employ," &c.

After praise, prayer, and the reading of appropriate passages of Scripture, very much in the order of usual Sundays, the pastor gives what is known as the "Action Sermon ;"—the text and theme expected to be in harmony with the solemn commemoration. This finished, after a repetition of prayer and praise, the old custom generally follows of "fencing the tables." In a few simple and earnest sentences, the warrant is set forth for an acceptable approach to the Holy Ordinance ; in which, warning to the presumptuous is wisely mingled, with what is equally needed, invitation and encouragement to the diffident and desponding.

The familiarly known hymn or paraphrase then follows,* sung generally to the solemn, plaintive strain

* " 'Twas on that night, when doom'd to know
The eager rage of every foe,
That night in which He was betrayed,
The Saviour of the world took bread :

And, after thanks and glory giv'n
To Him that rules in earth and heaven,
That symbol of His flesh He broke,
And thus to all His followers spoke :—

'My broken body thus I give
For you, for all ; take, eat, and live ;
And oft the sacred rite renew,
That brings My wondrous love to view.'

of "*Communion* ;" and while this is proceeding, the Elders of the Church adjourn to the vestry to bring in the sacred elements of Bread and Wine. At the close of the hymn, the presiding Minister, who has now taken his place below the pulpit, in front of the Communion Table, reads the divine words of Institution ; generally those contained in 1 Cor. xi. : Then follows the Consecration-prayer : in which, thanking God for all His mercies, and specially for the great work of Redemption, he invokes a blessing on so much of the elements of Bread and Wine as are set apart from a common to a sacred purpose. This ended, he begins, in the well understood phrase, to "serve the first Table." In other words, a short, simple address is delivered to those who are about to partake of the Holy Ordinance : brief meditative sentences to guide and assist their devotions.* At its close he proceeds to break

Then in His hands the cup He raised,
And God anew He thanked and praised ;
While kindness in His bosom glowed,
And from His lips salvation flowed :

My blood I thus pour forth, He cries,
To cleanse the soul in sin that lies ;
In this the covenant is sealed,
And Heaven's eternal grace revealed.

With love to man this cup is fraught,
Let all partake the sacred draught ;
Through latest ages let it pour,
In memory of my dying hour."

* "The position of a Presbyterian minister," says Dean Stanley, "at the time of the celebration of the Lord's Supper,

the Bread; and in the name of his Master puts it into the hands of the two communicants seated nearest him; not unfrequently the assisting Clergyman and one of the Elders: the latter partake of the rite in rotation. In doing so, he again repeats the words of Institution, almost invariably as follows:—"In that ever memorable night, in which the Saviour of the world was delivered into the hands of sinners, He took Bread; and having blessed it, as has already been done in His name, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying—Take, eat; this is My Body broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." After a brief pause the Cup is similarly given; accompanied with the further words:—"In like manner, after supper, He took the Cup," saying—"This Cup is the New Testament (or New Covenant) in My Blood, shed for many, for the remission of sins,—drink ye all of it. For as

when descending he takes his place behind the table with his Elders around him, precisely resembles the attitude of an early Christian Bishop surrounded by his Presbyters." "Then came the address," says the same writer, describing the mode of celebration in the first centuries. . . . "It was called a 'Homily' or 'Sermon,' that is, a conversation: not a speech or set discourse, but a talk, a homely colloquial instruction. The idea is still kept up in the French word *conference*. . . . It was the talking, the conversation of one Christian man with another: the practical address, as Justin Martyr says, exhorting the people to the imitation of the good things that they have just had read to them from the Bible. It is, in short, the very reverse of what is usually meant by a 'homily.'"—*Christian Institutions*, p. 56, 204.

often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He come."

The Elders * then go round the tables bearing the bread and wine,—conveying them from guest to guest. The solemnity of the act of Communion, while the latter are thus receiving the consecrated emblems, is only broken by the occasional repetition of some appropriate verse, further to lead or suggest meditation. When the platter of Bread and the Cup are again brought to the front of the Table, intimating that each communicant has partaken of the elements, a second brief "Table exhortation" succeeds; and at its close, the solemn benediction, "Go in peace; and may the God of love and peace go with you."

A series of similar Table services follow. These are addressed by some brother Minister who has come to share the labours and the blessing. After two, three, or four of such are completed; in other words, after opportunity has been given in succession for all the communicants to partake of the sacred rite, the officiating clergyman ascends the pulpit to close the service. In doing so, he not unfrequently recalls the fact, that after our Blessed Lord had instituted, and partaken of, the memorial of love with His disciples,—ere they left the Supper-table, and went out to the Mount of Olives, "they sung an hymn." After

* The undoubted practice of the Deacons in the early centuries. See Appendix.

the divine example, some appropriate Psalm or Paraphrase or Hymn is thus joined in; and immediately after, the Church, which during the various Table services was diminished in numbers, is again filled to listen to "the concluding Address." It is a hallowed opportunity for the Pastor, when all feelings are roused and warmed with the solemnity in which they have been engaged, to speak home in words and appeals of confidential affection to his flock. To the *Young*, who for the first time have been admitted, there are special admonitions given of counsel and exhortation.* To the *Afflicted*, who have "eaten their passover with bitter herbs," there are addressed reflections of consolation and comfort. To the *Aged*, who, it may be with many infirmities, have come to obey their Lord's dying command. To those, whether young or old, who have, unknown to themselves, communicated for the last time:—Each have a word spoken to them in season. With all the fatigue of the long preceding service, no portion of it is resorted or listened to with greater earnestness than this.† A

* It takes the place, or ought to take the place, of the "*Confirmation Address*" familiar in the sister Church of England, and forms the appropriate summing up of the meetings or classes for 'Young Communicants,' held for some weeks preparatory to the Ordinance.

† The Writer had deemed it well to include in what follows, more than one of these closing Addresses, as well as several of the forementioned 'Table Services.' Indeed, in that form they

befitting Psalm is again sung, and the final benediction pronounced.

“Then every head
Bends low in parting worship ; mute, and deep
The whisper of the soul ; and who may tell
In that brief silent space, how many a hope
Is born that hath a life beyond the tomb ?
At better banquet ; where we all may meet
And take the Cup of bliss, to thirst no more.” *

The preceding details need not be prolonged by referring to the immemorial Evening Service and Sermon at the close of the Communion Sunday : one, often of a peculiarly stirring and elevating character. The long summer Sabbath day terminates with the worshippers dispersing on their homeward way, (we speak still exclusively of the rural Parish, though equally hallowed memories of the thronged City Church mingle with these), along road, and lane, and mountain footpath, as they had been seen gathering at the morning hour ; or, in the words descriptive of the close of the

were ready for the press. But, on second thoughts, he deemed it preferable, not to omit, but to cast them into a somewhat altered shape ; partly as Sunday Evening Sermons, and partly as Meditations, &c., comprised in the Second portion of the Volume. Well understood from a Scottish standpoint, they might have been misapprehended by those habituated to a different sacramental rubric and ritual.

* Mrs. Sigourney.

great Hebrew convocation, "They return unto their tents, joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David His servant, and for Israel His people" (1 Kings viii. 66.)

The writer's main object in recording a few such memorials of 'bygone Sunday services sacredly associated, will be attained, if, under a somewhat new and less conventional form, he has succeeded in furnishing another suitable "Companion to the Lord's Table."

Still better will the result be, if these pages tend, however indirectly, to show that among all denominations of true Christians, by whatever name known, there is, in this Divine rite, a golden tie which links heart to heart; the prophecy, pledge, and prelude, of that "Supper Table of the Lamb," among whose guests all earthly conventionalisms and shibboleths will cease for ever; and where, in the sentiment just quoted, of a gifted poet, with the one only test of love to HIM, we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of our Father.

"Day of Peace!—such depths revealing

Of the love of Christ our King;

Day of Rest!—what balm of healing

Can thy hallowed moments bring!

Foretaste of the bliss eternal

That His ransomed ones shall know;

Blessed Gift of Consolation

To His waiting Church below.

In Thy sunlight seeing clearer
Glimpses of the land of love,
By Thy worship drawing nearer
To the sinless souls above ;
Fill the chalice of salvation
From that crimson Fount of Thine ;
Clothe us in the marriage-garment
While we keep the Feast divine !”

PSALMS OF LIFE.

* * * *For much that is of interest about the time and mode of celebration of the Lord's Supper, in the early and mediæval Church, the Reader is referred to the Historical Appendix.*

PART I.

COMMUNION SERMONS.

I.

SUNDAY MORNING.

THE CORN OF WHEAT FALLING INTO THE GROUND AND DYING.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—John xii. 24.



TO understand the scope and meaning of these words, we must connect them with the verses in the immediately preceding context.

Some Greeks, not Grecian Jews, but Gentiles—what were called Proselytes of the Gate—had gone to Jerusalem to worship with other pilgrims at the Feast of the Passover. They came to Philip of Bethsaida, probably attracted by his Greek name, with the request, “Sir, we would see Jesus.”

The disciples could not fail to observe the profound emotion which the desire thus expressed produced on their divine Lord. When Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together told Jesus, it brought from His lips an utterance of strange triumph:—“*The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified !*” Occurring as it did in that solemn season of Passion week, there was something in the petition and the

petitioners alike remarkable. These Greeks were Representative men. In the eye of Christ, it was "a prayer," to use the words of Stier, "in the name of their nation and of all nations," to see the world's Saviour. It was the heathen (the "other sheep not of the Jewish fold") soliciting to be gathered in; ay, too, and the *Jew* introducing the *Gentile*. Need we wonder, that the Redeemer beholds in this, the first-fruits of a mighty ingathering—a pledge that the time was at hand when the covenant and uncovenanted nations would be blended and reconciled;—the middle wall of partition broken down, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God? 'What!' He seems to say, 'Gentiles coming to My light! aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise! Men from Pagan shores, and that, too, from no vague curiosity, but with the intense earnestness and wistful longing of "watchers for the morning," uttering the cry of weary humanity, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" Then, the hour is come that the heathen are given for Mine inheritance; when men shall be blessed in Me, and all nations shall call Me blessed.'

But, His exclamation of triumph comes to an abrupt conclusion. All at once, by a singularly rapid transition, He changes the theme. That momentary glimpse of glory seems dimmed and clouded by the intervention of some troubled thought;—"a prelude to Gethsemane." It is as if some bolt had suddenly darted athwart the azure sky; and He had called to mind that the way to glorification is by suffering and death. The Cross must be borne ere the Crown can

be gained. While in one breath, with an unwonted gleam of joy on His countenance, He proclaims, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified;" the "decease" He must first "accomplish" casts its awful shadow on His path; and He adds the similitude of our text;—" *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.*" You will observe, in the announcement and enforcement of a great truth, He goes, not to the Volume of Prophecy (this He might have done, and probably *would* have done, had He been discoursing to Jews alone). But in the presence of these Greeks, He turns to pages better understood by them; and allows Nature, through her simplest processes, to speak, and unfold the impending mystery. He brings before them the familiar parable of the seed-corn dropped into the earth: shewing how life comes out of death—a new and more exuberant growth springing from the destruction of the inserted grain.

Dear brethren, the subject surely is specially appropriate in the prospect we have of commemorating the death and sufferings of our divine Saviour. Come, then, let us gather around the lowly emblem, and contemplate "Christ, THE CORN OF WHEAT."

In doing so, let me direct your meditations to these three points—

The Corn of Wheat abiding alone.

The Corn of Wheat falling into the ground and dying.

The Corn of Wheat bringing forth much fruit.

I. *The Corn of Wheat* ABIDING ALONE.

It is Christ's humiliation which we are mainly

called in these words, as well as in our commemorative feast of to-day, to ponder.

But in order, by contrast, to bring out the wonders of that humiliation, let us, as here suggested, go back to a past Eternity, and contemplate that *Corn of Wheat abiding alone*.

Immensity a void. The mysterious Trinity in unity, pervading and filling all space: No need of worlds or angels to glorify them. Stupendous thought! To wing our way up the ascending steeps, with no planet for a resting-place:—No created spots where we can breathe, and pause, and breathe again:—Nothing above, below, around, but GOD!! No trill of an angel's song, to break the trance of everlasting ages:—*There* was the Corn of Wheat *abiding alone*:—The Eternal Son with the Eternal Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was!

Sublime indeed is it to contemplate Christ at this moment, as the Sovereign Ruler of His vast universe: marshalling its hosts of stars; kindling up the Altar-fires of Heaven;—"binding the sweet influences of Pleiades; loosing the bands of Orion; guiding Arcturus with his sons." But equally grand and august is it to revert to the period before the existence of this wealth and munificence of power;—when no forests were waving, no waters rolling, no planets circling in their spheres. To think of the great Centre of all, then reposing in the solitudes of His own Infinite Being;—no tongue of angel, redeemed or unredeemed, to hymn His praise;—yet ineffably glorious in His own blessed Nature!

Behold "the Corn of Wheat"—behold the Second Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity "abiding alone!"

II. We are next called to consider *the Corn of Wheat*
FALLING INTO THE GROUND, AND DYING.

Impelled by nothing but His own free, sovereign, unmerited grace, Christ resolves not to abide alone. He is to come down to a ruined world in order to effect its ransom and salvation. Compassionating the wandering star which had broken loose from its orbit, plunging ever deeper and deeper into darkness,—He resolves to replace it within the sphere of the divine regards.

But, *how replace it?* How, in other words, is this Redemption from sin and death to be effected? Is it by becoming incarnate in order to live a pattern-life, the embodiment and manifestation of all virtue and moral excellence; and thus exhibit in the sight of apostate men a model of unsullied purity, sublime unselfishness, peerless self-sacrifice, divine love?

He doubtless did so. He, the Infinite One, descended in the likeness of sinful flesh; and as He walked through a guilt-stricken woe-worn world, wherever He went He scattered the riches of His beneficence. Compassion beamed in His look; grace flowed from His lips; disease crouched at His feet; sickness at His touch took wings, and fled away. God the Father complacently beholding that sinless, Holy Being, proclaimed from the excellent glory—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But all this was subordinate to higher requirements—more awful responsibilities. "Christ also hath once

suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18). Regarding Him as merely the Ideal of Humanity, the manifested perfection of divine "Manhood," He could not, in that capacity, *save* us. Death (in this most august and solemn of all illustrations) must be the condition of life. The corn of wheat—to revert to the symbol in outer material Nature—may be perfect, a perfect specimen of its kind. Nay more, it has in it the germ of vitality—the seminal principle of life. But if left by itself in the granary, it cannot fructify. It remains an inert unproductive thing,—“it abideth alone.” It must first be sown, or, we may figuratively express it, be buried in the earth. But thus falling into the ground and dying, it comes up a verdant stalk, ultimately bearing fruit, the parent and progenitor of a thousand harvests.

So it was with Jesus, the Lord and Giver of life. How wondrously does Nature’s lowliest page thus preach to us the great central truth of the Gospel;—“Him who died for us, and rose again.” As I go to the field where the husbandman is scattering his grain, I see in one of those tiny seeds a type and interpreter of that Mystery which angels desire to look into. It tells me that the way to the seed’s multiplication and to Christ’s glorification is the same—viz., by the law of *death*. I see the corn of wheat, which abode alone in the barn, taken and cast into the ground; harrowed over; left during winter or in early spring to slumber under the insensate clod. Anon the field is flushed with living green,—the one yellow seed has started up, multiplied thirty-fold. Out of apparent decay and

dissolution there emerges prolific life and loveliness:—"it bringeth forth *much fruit*." "I came," says the Great Antitype, and Interpreter of these nature-teachings, "that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

There are two words in our text, on which we may for a moment instructively pause. The one suggesting the *necessity*, the other the *voluntariness* of the death of Jesus.

(1) "EXCEPT a corn of wheat fall into the ground." "*Unless*."—There was no other possible way by which the world could be redeemed. Without the dying of the corn-seed—no life. Without the shedding of blood in the person of the Divine Sin-bearer—no remission.

This is not the place to enter on the consideration or explanation of theological difficulties and perplexities. The whole principle of Surety substitution is a mystery to us; though, too, abundantly exemplified and manifested, alike in the analogy of Nature and in human experience. But we may well believe, that had there been any other possible method, by which the vindication of God's law could have been effected and the sinner saved,—the Corn of Wheat would to this day have remained (if we can with reverence employ such a figure) where it had been from all Eternity, in its place in the Heavenly Garner. Christ would have "abode alone;"—God, the Being of infinite compassion as well as of righteousness, *would* never and *could* never have permitted redundant and superfluous suffering in the Son of His love. It was the one only means of restitution and safety. "It

became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through suffering" (Heb. ii. 10.) There was a necessity for all that He endured, arising out of the very Nature of God. The law, in the outer world, of the seed-growing, became a law to the Moral Lawgiver Himself.

(2.) We have the *voluntariness* of Christ's death here set forth. "If it die!"—"If." This same monosyllable He Himself repeats with similar emphasis a few verses further on;—"And I, *if* I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

It is a conditional particle of intense and momentous significance. It sets before us the perfect freeness and spontaneity of the Sacrifice;—uttered at the moment it was, with the shadow of the Cross projected on His path—His hour of untold Suffering close at hand. May we not take it as revealing to us the *human*, in the divine Person of the God-man—for the instant shrinking at the anticipation of coming anguish? "*If* it die!" As if He were casting up and pondering in His own infinite Mind, the possibility of evading the terrible necessity. "*If* it die." For a moment, if I may so express it, appalled at the awful yet indispensable conditions Suretyship involved!

How full indeed is all this passage of His strong human emotions. A few verses succeeding He exclaims—"Now is the judgment," or, as some have rendered it, though we may challenge the accuracy of the rendering—"Now is the CRISIS* of this world." But in

* The Greek word is the same as our English (*κρίσις*).

reality it was so :—the crisis-moment—the great turning-point in the world's salvation. Am I to save Myself—or save *it*? Am I (the Corn of Wheat) to fall into the ground and die, or am I to return, unsundered to death, to the heaven whence I came? Are the longings and hopes and aspirations of 4000 years to be rolled back again into the abyss of chaos and night? Or, is the debt to be paid, and earth's millions to be saved? “Now is the *Crisis* of this world.”—The Church of the past and the Church of the future are, as it were, hushed into silence, listening with arrested ear for the announcement of the resolve, which rests with the Divine Speaker. Is He to pause or go on? Is the cup to pass from Him, or is He to drink it? Is He to drop into the ground and become life for others; or, to “*abide alone*?” He Himself, at this same crisis-hour, prolongs the soliloquy—“Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?” “What shall I say?”—Shall it be, Father, save Me! Accept My past life of loving filial obedience! Father, let Me leave untasted this dire chalice of death. Let Me revoke My word of promised Surrender and Sacrifice, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death!” Father, let the world perish. Forego the world's harvest: take me to Thyself to abide alone, and for ever?

We read in another place, regarding the great Harvest-home of the world, that “the Reapers are the Angels.” A writer on this passage of a bygone age, has graphically pictured angel whispering in breathless interest to angel, as they look forward to this reaping time,—“What will be the solution of

this stupendous problem?" "*What will He say?*" Shall we have the joy of reaping our golden harvest;—or, will the Corn of Wheat refuse to fall into the earth, and abide alone? What DID He say? "Father, save Me from this hour! *nevertheless for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name!*" It is enough. In these last words He has given the sure "prelude of victory." He will save others, Himself He will not save! The angels are not to be bereft of their glorious reaping. This Man of Sorrows (His soul in trouble):—this God-man Mediator, going forth weeping, bearing in Himself precious Seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.*

We all recall the old Roman story, when, in obedience to the oracular response, a human life, by an act of heroic self-surrender, paid the demanded penalty, and the earthquake-rent was closed.

Christ, in a nobler sense, was that Victim. By the supremest of all deeds of self-sacrifice, because super-human and divine, the yawning gulf between earth and Heaven has been filled up. The Prince of Life, the sinless Son of God, has given Himself for a ransom.

* See Dr. Harris' "Great Teacher" *passim*. The answer to the divine appeal of the Suppliant was, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (v. 28). This forms the third and last of the articulate voices heard from heaven during our Lord's ministry on earth. The first was by the rushing river of Jordan at His baptism: the second on the great mountain sanctuary of Hermon at the Transfiguration. This third and final one, to use the words of another, "was from a cloudless April sky in the courts of the Temple."

Like another Aaron, "He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed." In the lowly emblem of our text, the Corn of Wheat dies, and becomes the life of a perishing world.

This leads us

III. To *the Corn of Wheat* BRINGING FORTH MUCH FRUIT.

It was prophesied regarding the Redeemer, that He should "*see His seed*" (Isaiah liii. 10). "This," says He, "is the Father's will who hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John vi. 39). In that group of Hellenists—men from the shores of the most intellectual of the European nations—who now stood in His presence and had given the key-note to all this discourse, the Saviour beheld the first "handful of corn on the top of the mountains, whose fruit would yet shake like Lebanon." The wise men had come from the East to worship at His *birth*: these Greeks had come from the West to worship before His *death*.* The simple desire, "*We would see Jesus*," was, to Him who heard it, better than all gold and frankincense and myrrh. It was as precious ointment against the day of His burial. With the omniscient glance of Deity, He that moment foreknew that He was about to die. He (the Tree of Life) was to be felled to the ground; the axe was already laid to the root. But as many a noble denizen of the forest, coming with a crash on the sward, scatters its seed all

* See Stier and Alford.

around, and in a few years there starts up a vast plantation:—So Christ, by dying, scattered far and wide the grain of spiritual and immortal life. The seed and the leaves of this Tree are for the healing of the nations. The divine Corn-Seed drops into the ground; a golden harvest waves, and Heaven is garnered with ransomed souls.

Brethren, it is surely delightful for us, on this Day of Communion, to connect the cross with the triumphal crown. We are about to contemplate the one solitary fact, *the Corn of Wheat falling into the ground and dying*. But the eye of faith is carried forward to that final harvest of the world, when the mighty Conqueror will be recognised and welcomed, as the Balm of all hearts, the Redressor of all wrongs. Seeing of the fruit of the travail of His Soul, He shall be satisfied: and surrounded with His spiritual Seed exclaim, "Behold I, and the children whom Thou hast given Me." The cry subsequently heard from these same Greeks and their shores, "Come over and help us," will become the shout of nations. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

Oh wondrous multitude which no man can number! A multitude growing ever since Abel bent, a solitary worshipper, in the heavenly Sanctuary, with his solitary song—the first solitary sheaf in these Heavenly granaries. Yes! the song is deepening; the sheaves are multiplying. The patriarchal Church swelled the store; the Mosaic Church added to its bundles of first-fruits, and its members prolonged the festal anthem. The strain was taken up by shepherds and fishermen of Galilee. It was echoed by Magi of Persia, and

heathens of Greece. It spread along the shores of the Mediterranean; it rang in the halls of Cæsar. It was taken up by the waves of the Western seas. It reached the shores of Britain, and from her sent its echoes round the world. India uttered it from her Pagodas. Iceland proclaimed it amid her eternal winters. Ethiopia stretched out her hands unto God; and this was the burden of the universal prayer, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

The song of the Church on earth is nothing to the song of the Church above. It has expanded into "the sound of much people, the sound of a great multitude, the noise of many waters, the voice of mighty thunderings." And what is its theme? It is the death of the Corn-Seed, and the resultant "much fruit." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kingdom and tongue and people and nation."

Brethren, we come this day to present ourselves as an offering;—living sacrifices on God's altar; as it were a portion of the fruits of the Saviour's atonement: acknowledging, that if we have any life in us—it is as springing from that Corn of Wheat we have now seen (and are about through the more vivid emblem of His own instituted Ordinance to see) falling into the ground and dying. We come, joyfully owning and confessing, that all we have we derive from Him, as the life of our souls.

May not this appropriately form the closing practical thought—If He died for *us*, what have we done, what are we willing to do for Him? The lowly disciple of Bethany brought the best offering she had,

with which to embalm her Lord on the eve of His decease. Are we preparing our tributes of affection?—our alabaster box filled with the choicest graces of humility, faith, repentance, new obedience—loving Him who has given us, as the mightiest proof and measure of His love, that instead of “abiding alone” through the everlasting ages with the Father, He was willing to fall into the ground and die?


Spirit of God! consecrate our Communion Sabbath! Open the doors of the banqueting house! Unseal the Sacred mysteries! Let Thy people leave the din of the world behind them, that they may come and “see Jesus!” With their hearts full of the lowly similitude of our text; with their footsteps turned to Gethsemane and Calvary,—the cross and the grave,—let them obey the summons, ‘Come, see the Corn of Wheat laid in the furrow of darkness and death! Come, see the place where the Lord suffered; Come, see the place where the Lord lay: for He hath swallowed up death in Victory!’ May Angels, looking down upon us as we are assembled at the Holy Table, be able to say, “They joy before Thee, according to the joy in harvest; and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil!”

II.

SUNDAY EVENING.

THE GREAT RESOLVE.

“We will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.”—Micah iv. 5.

HE Sacrament of the Supper is a votive as well as a commemorative ordinance. And these words may be appropriately taken as embodying a holy resolution, or rather a series of holy resolutions, on the part of those who have recently recorded their vows.

“The Name of the Lord,” it is said, “is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. xviii. 10). You who, as good soldiers, have anew attested your allegiance to your heavenly Leader, are represented as garrisoning this divine Stronghold; —“They that trust in the Lord shall be like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” It has its “places of defence”—casemated battlements. And we are now to invite you to “go about Zion, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces.” The various Towers of this Great spiritual Fortress are nothing else than the titles and attributes with which, in His own Inspired Volume,

God has seen meet to make Himself known. Of such there are six, more conspicuously presented to us, in Old Testament Scripture alone:—

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU.	<i>The Tower of Righteousness.</i>
JEHOVAH-SHALOM.	<i>The Tower of Peace.</i>
JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.	<i>The Tower of the Divine Presence.</i>
JEHOVAH-NISSI.	<i>The Tower of Defence.</i>
JEHOVAH-JIREH.	<i>The Tower of Trust.</i>
JEHOVAH-ROPHI.	<i>The Tower of Healing.</i>

After a Sacramental Season, it is my privilege, as we survey these glorious munitions, to say to all believing communicants, in the words of the Prophet Zechariah —“I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name.” *

I. The First Tower we mention is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU. *“The Lord our Righteousness.”*

We were surely to-day specially invited to behold this Tower built on “the Rock of Ages.” What was the main purpose of our gathering at the Holy Table, but to commemorate the Prince of Life working out for us, by His obedience and death, a righteousness not our own? Any shelter we can rear is a tower of sand—a citadel of bulrushes—that will leave us naked and

* A recent discriminating writer on the Life and Times of the Leader of the Reformation in Germany, mentions, that in the British Museum there is a medal struck to commemorate the first Jubilee of the Confession of Augsburg. This Confession was drawn up by Melancthon under the supervision of Luther. The medal bears, on the reverse, a legend, “*Turris Fortissima Nomen Domini.*”

defenceless in that solemn hour which is to try every man's work, and every man's righteousness of what sort it is. But, says Jehovah, "I bring near My righteousness" (Isa. xlv. 13). The salvation wrought out by His Eternal Son He has "appointed for walls and for bulwarks." And the believer's prayer who has fled to this Refuge city is—"Let Thy hand be upon the Man of Thy right hand, on the Son of Man whom Thou hast made *strong* for Thyself" (Ps. lxxx. 17). He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and *brought in Everlasting Righteousness* (Dan. ix. 24). Perish all else that would interfere with it. Let the giant deed—the triumph of divine sorrow and love which we have had before us in significant symbol—stand forth in its solitary grandeur. To attempt aught of our own by way of supplement or addition to the merits of the Divine Surety, would be seeking to gild refined gold; holding up the taper to help the sunlight; or listening to those who counselled the youthful conqueror of Goliath to cumber himself with useless armour, a helmet of steel, and greaves of brass, and an untempered shield. Like him, let us cast them all aside, saying, as we stand panoplied in the great imputed righteousness:—"Behold! O God, our Shield, and look on the face of Thine Anointed." Brethren and fellow-Communicants, think as ye pace that Tower, with its memories of suffering and victory, how it has been crowded by the Saints in the past. You are walking where Abraham walked, when "he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." You are treading what was consecrated by the footsteps of

Isaac and Jacob ;—Moses, and David, and Isaiah ;—the blessed Apostles, the holy Martyrs, the members of the true Church throughout all the world and in every age. You are taking up, in the text, the strain chanted and sung by each of them in turn—"We will walk in the name of the Lord our God : " and " this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS " (Jer. xxiii. 6).*

II. A Second Tower is JEHOVAH-SHALOM. "*The Lord my Peace :*" or "*The Lord send Peace.*"

This Spiritual Tower of Peace stands side by side with the Tower of Righteousness. "The work of righteousness shall be *peace*" (Isa. xxxii. 17). "Being justified by faith"—faith in the finished work and righteousness of Christ—"we have peace with God" (Rom. v. 1). "Let him take hold of My Strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he *shall* make peace with Me" (Isa. xxvii. 5). It is through Him, who is emphatically THE STRONG ONE, that we can have peace. "Having made peace, through the blood of His cross" (Col. iii. 20). The gifted author of the "*Pilgrim's Progress*" speaks of the window of the chamber called *Peace*, in which Christian lay, as opening towards the risen sun. The window faces the Sun of Righteousness. It gets its very name from the "*Brightness of His rising.*"

* In the account which has accidentally presented itself to the writer as these pages are passing through the press, of the death-bed of one of the most cultured intellects of the century, and one of the most eloquent of its divines, the narrator mentions, that "One ejaculation was constantly upon his lips, 'Christ my righteousness !'"—*Memoir of Professor Archer Butler*, p. xxxviii.

Isaiah, in one of the beautiful emblems of his later prophecy, likens the believer's peace to the "flowing of a river" (xlviii. 18). How as of a river? Whence these tranquil streams—these still, deep-flowing waters? They cannot be fed from the low marshy ground of his own goodness;—his virtues, or moralities; his fitful frames and feelings;—but from the Everlasting Hills:—from that Righteousness, which the Psalmist describes to be as "the great mountains" (Ps. xxxvi. 6). Like the glacier Alps, from which streams, melted by the sun, are flowing all summer long in the midst of drought, when every other channel is dry.

Walk up and down, as Christian sentinels, in this Name of the Lord;—singing your watch-song, "Thou wilt keep him, O God, in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee!"

What a repose this Gospel peace gives amid all the petty troubles of life! The Apostle speaks of it as "the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding," and which "keeps the heart" (according to the meaning of the word in the original), as in a citadel or garrison. What a calm elevation is imparted to the present; while the future can be contemplated undismayed! The chariot of peace in which the believer is seated rolls on; and life's troubles are but as the thin clouds of dust on the gusty highway. Yes, ye who climbed so lately "the Hill of blessing," as ye enter this Tower of Zion, and gaze from its loopholed window, see how, when God giveth His beloved the gracious boon of peace, He makes all things look peaceful. All that belongs to the Christian; his duties; his engagements; his very cares and difficulties, are softened and mellowed

with this calm tranquillity; just as in nature the setting sun transforms and metamorphoses the whole landscape into gold. While from your Peace-Tower you thus look along life's valley, you can descry also, beyond the border river, the fields of the true Canaan "dressed in living green," and which this purchased peace has made all your own. With the present rest of grace in possession, and the rest of glory in reversion, we may well say of the Lord, "He is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high Tower."

Let us joyfully renew and ratify our vows; and with earnest heart and voice utter the resolution, "We will walk in THIS name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

III. A Third Tower is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH. "*The Lord is there:*"—*The Tower of the Divine Presence.*

It is a blessed thing for the believer to bear constantly about with him the realised sense of the Divine nearness, and it is his peculiar privilege and prerogative to do so. God, indeed, is everywhere. The world, the universe has written on its every portal JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—"The Lord is there." It is gleaming in starry letters on the nightly firmament. It is carved in deep hieroglyphics on earth's lowest strata. It is inscribed on the brow of its loftiest mountains. It is written in mosaic on the floor of the sounding sea. Among the forest glades,—the cathedral aisles of tangled wood,—where neither hammer nor axe nor tool of iron hath built a Temple, *God is there.* Amid the waste of

desert sands ; on the mossy bank ; on the lonely shore, *God is there.* In the summer calm ; the raging storm ; the smiling harvest, *God is there.* Like one of those giant mountains whose base is furrowed with lakes and valleys, and its top pierces the clouds ; so is the Ever nigh—the Omnipresent One. Heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool. From among its lowliest insect tribes, up to the myriad ranks of Angel and Archangel—JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—the *Lord is there.*

He is the living God also in *Providence* : alike in great things and in small. When we hear of kingdoms convulsed ; nations reeling and trembling, *The Lord is there.* “ Shall there be evil,” says the prophet, “ in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ? ” (Amos iii. 6). When we hear of death darkening the humblest dwelling ; when we see the tiniest bud of earth’s affection falling, as we think, prematurely to the ground, “ *The Lord is there ;* ” “ Who knoweth not in all these things that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ? ” (Job xii. 9). Yes, it is delightful and comforting surely, with the eye of faith, to see Jehovah thus riding in the chariot of Providence, reining in (if I may so express it) at His sovereign Will its fiery coursers : the mighty wheels, like those in Ezekiel’s vision,—rather their complex movements, wheel within wheel,—revolving and evolving nothing but good : He guiding and supervising all ; appointing every sorrow that is endured and every tear that is shed !

There is yet a nobler and pre-eminent sense in which His covenant people can flee into this Strong Tower ; and walking in the name of their God can

say—"The Lord of Hosts is with us,—the God of Jacob is our Refuge:"—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). Oh! how it would hallow all life's duties, and take the sting from many of its sorrows, and fortify against its temptations, if we could ever regard ourselves as *God's fortresses*: our souls bearing the superscription on their living gates—"The Lord is there." Where the term we now speak of is used, Micah is gazing with prophetic inspiration on the future city of Jerusalem, and the Sanctuary which was yet to crown the heights of Zion. He tells us that although there will be the absence of the glory of the First Temple,—no visible Shekinah—no visible cloud,—yet that the presence of the invisible God will be diffused like an odour of sacred incense around; and the name of it shall be JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.

Dear friends, to-day's watch-word, circulating from guest to guest at the Holy Table, was "Surely the Lord is in this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Let us seek to perpetuate the blessings of a Communion-Sabbath by the holy resolve—"If *Thy Presence* go not with us, carry us not hence." "Thou, O Lord, art *in the midst of us*, and we are called by Thy name." "We will walk in *this* name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

IV. A Fourth Tower is JEHOVAH-NISSI. "*The Lord my Banner*:"—*The Tower of Defence*.

This reminds all of us who have given public testimony of our faith in Christ, that we are still in an

enemy's country. You remember how Bunyan (to quote the great Dreamer again) represents Christiana and her children knocking at the Gate; while in a castle, hard by, there were those who were assailing them. If any leave a Communion-table to return to the world in their own strength, they shall assuredly fall. But we go not a warfare on our own charges. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember *the name of the Lord our God*:" and He that is for us, is greater than all that can be against us.

Let our moral attitude be like the workmen on the walls of Zion in Nehemiah's time, building with the sword girded by our side; ever ready, when the missiles are flying thick and fast around, to flee to Him who is a "High Tower against the enemy;" and who thus invites all weak and helpless ones—"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. xxvi. 20). This is the true Tower of King David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men (Sol. Song iv. 4). "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For Thou art the glory of their strength: and in Thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our DEFENCE: and the Holy One of Israel is our king" (Ps. lxxxix. 15-18). "We will walk in *this* name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

V. Our Fifth Tower is JEHOVAH-JIREH. "*The Lord will provide*:"—*The Tower of Trust*.

It is always desirable for a conquering army either to be near its supplies, or to keep up its line of communication. That broken, all is lost. The Christian has his promise of assured help: "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 19). "*The Lord will provide*." Ah, that *future*! that unknown, sometimes dark and chequered future, how many a thought it costs! Who can forecast the varying scenes of changeful life? It is like walking up some sequestered dell; every turn in the path presents something new. A cluster of flowers here, a rotten branch or decaying tree there: now a flowing stream, now a quiet pool, now a brawling cascade; now a gleam of sunlight, now the driving rain or muttering thunder. But each apparently capricious turn in life's way, all its accidents and incidents, are the appointments of Infinite Wisdom: and "they that *know Thy Name shall put their trust in Thee*." Trust:—trust in the goodness, and mercy, and faithfulness of God, is surely one at least of the great lessons which a Communion Season inculcates. Looking to these symbols and pledges of unutterable love, you can confidently make the challenge—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans viii. 32). A child in the midst of the storm can muffle its head in its father's arms and fall asleep. God is thy *Father*! Walk up and down in the strength of that Gospel Name. Every earthly father does in a small scale

to his family what the Great Parent does on a large scale to all His people. From that glorious Tower on the Hill of Ordinances you can look through the embrasures behind, as well as before. Survey the landmarks of the bygone pilgrimage! Count up your Ebenezers—the providential interpositions of the past, and then say—taking these as pledges and guarantees for the time to come, “Thou hast *been* my help: leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” The future, as we have already said, with all its vicissitudes, is in His keeping and ordering. You may work the loom: the shuttle may be in *your* hands;—but the pattern is all *His*: the intermingling threads of varied hue, even what are dark and sombre. Talk not of a tangled web when it is that of the Great Artificer. Confide in that heart of Infinite Love. Shall we dream of being wiser than God? Shall we dream of correcting His Book of Sovereign decrees? of altering the building-plans of the Divine Architect? No! trust Him, where sense cannot trace Him. Trust is a staff not for level plains and smooth highways. It is the *alpenstock*, the pilgrim prop for the mountaineer, for the rugged ascent, the slippery path, the glacier crevasse.

As the *El-Shaddai*—the All-sufficient, God hath said, “I will never leave thee, I will” (in the redundant emphasis and energy of the original) “never, never, never forsake thee.” He is a Rich Provider, a Sure Provider, a Willing Provider, a Wise Provider. JEHOVAH-JIREH! “We will walk in *this* name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.”

VI. Yet one other Tower remains to be noted.

JEHOVAH-ROPHI. *The Tower of Healing*:—"I am the Lord that healeth thee."

Among those who partook of the Holy Sacrament, doubtless there were not a few members of the ever wide family of affliction. Some, experiencing soul-sorrows—hidden, unspoken griefs, too deep for utterance or for tears. In the case of others, trials, the nature of which is only too patent to fellow-worshippers and fellow-communicants, from the sable attire and symbols of mourning. It is blessed for you to think of Him whose love you commemorated, as Himself the King of sorrows—the Prince of sufferers: who, just *because* He was thus "acquainted with grief," is pre-eminently able to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds. He proclaims as His Name (and He suffered, and wept, and bled, and died, that He might have a right to say it) JEHOVAH-ROPHI:—"I am the Lord that healeth thee." He is the true "Healing-tree," which, cast into your bitterest Marah-pool, will make its waters sweet.

Brethren, if other earthly portions have perished, cleave to Him who is unfailing and imperishable: whose Name survives, when prized earthly *names* have either faded in oblivion, or are whispered through tears. When, let me ask, is the name of God most comforting? "I have remembered," says the Psalmist, "Thy name, O Lord, *in the night*" (Ps. cxix. 55). It was at Jacob's fierce struggle-hour, as at many of our own, he was led to prompt the earnest question to Him who was wrestling with him, "*What is thy name?*" And, as with the Patriarch, He blesses us there. That Name of God is like a lighthouse, with

its six-sided revolving lamps, it shines brightest in the gloom of trial. If some of the loopholes of your Tower be darkened: if the sun has set; and the midnight sky be over and around you; be it yours to sing—" *Thou wilt light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness;*" "God our Maker giveth songs in the night."

My closing communion wish and prayer is, that that Name, which is above every name, may be to all of you as "Ointment poured forth." "*The name of the Lord!*" it is spoken of as the badge at a more enduring Feast in the Church of the glorified. "*His name,*" we read, "shall be upon their foreheads." Nay more; that *Name* is to form the theme of the saints' everlasting song. For what is the ascription of the Church triumphant—the ransomed conquerors beheld by St. John in vision, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God?—"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify THY NAME?"

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Three in One in covenant for our salvation:—Send us help from the Sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion!" that the resolve following a transient season of Communion on earth, may form at once the vow and the joy of Eternity—

"WE WILL WALK IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD FOR EVER AND EVER."

III.

SUNDAY MORNING.

PSALM OF THE PILGRIMS.

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house : they will be still praising Thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee ; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."—Psalm lxxxiv. 1-7.



HIS is emphatically a Communicant's Psalm ; and occurs appropriately to-day in our ordinary course of exposition.

Conjectures have been numerous and varied on its authorship and historical bearings. This would not be the time or place to enter at length on the vindication of any favourite theory. Enough to remark, that, while by very general consent it is regarded as a Psalm of the Jewish Pilgrims on their way to one of the annual Feasts, there is, to say the least—following not a few eminent authorities—a strong probability

that it is not of David's but of Hezekiah's times; and refers to the gathering of festal worshippers during his occupancy of the throne.* That pious monarch inaugurated his reign by a season of national humiliation, and by a subsequent purification of the Temple; ridding the latter of idolatrous objects which had clustered around it during the life of his apostate predecessor;—cleansing its courts, regilding and restoring cedar-gates and porticoes,—altar, and table, and candlestick;—also reviving the ceremonial of music, in accordance with the Divine model appointed by David and Asaph.

Hezekiah, however, did not rest satisfied with this outer reformation and revival, noble as it was. On the completion of the task, he calls together all his subjects to make a consecration of a nobler temple still,—that of their own souls. Moreover, the same deep-seated religious zeal prompts him to decree a great sacramental season. A Passover is to be celebrated; and not for Judah only: but, with his patriotic heart sighing over the disruption and alienation of the ten tribes, he would once more endeavour to re-unite the dual kingdom in sacred fellowship and service:—that, too, even though the period of the year was unusual, and the dark cloud of the Assyrian invasion was gathering in the north-eastern sky. He would have them forget

* Dean Plumptre has an interesting and ingenious chapter in his "Biblical Studies" on "the Psalms of the Sons of Korah," of which this is one. And though his application of the eighty-fourth Psalm (to which he makes special reference) is different from ours, he states, with his usual ability, the historical grounds for referring it to the reign of Hezekiah, pp. 148-163.

for a time their differences, and meet together under the old roof-tree of Jerusalem's Sanctuary—around her hallowed altars; and under her anointed Priest and King, be one again. It was a beautiful conception; and one, surely, in all respects worthy and desirable; for indeed the Passover had not been duly kept since the age of Joshua. Oh! would not this be the answered prayer of another magnificent Psalm, most probably also of his:—the sigh of the true-hearted over the dismemberment of church and state—"Return, we beseech Thee, O God of Hosts; look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine!"

He allows no time to elapse in carrying the project into effect. No sooner is the Temple purged and re-decorated, and the old ceremonial revived, than messengers are despatched through the land "from Dan to Beersheba," and especially to the Kingdom of Israel, to proclaim the approaching Paschal solemnity. They speed from town to town, from village to village; blowing up the trumpet in the new moon; announcing the time appointed—the solemn feast-day. As was quite to be expected (what alas! is found too often the accompaniment or result of ecclesiastical divisions)—the royal couriers in many instances met only with insult. The sacred enthusiasm of the king was traduced and misunderstood. Not a few forfeited the intended blessing;—the dew that was to descend on the mountains of Zion; when "the good and pleasant thing" might have been revived, of "brethren" (brethren once, and who should have been brethren still) "dwelling together again in unity."

Nevertheless, rejected by some, a considerable num-

ber from the more northern tribes responded to the call. The blare of the silver trumpets awoke the dormant religious patriotism; and ere many days had elapsed, the great pilgrim road—the Jewish “Via Sacra,” untraversed with the same intent for ages—was again studded with travellers singing, though with what has been well called “pathetic joy,” the Songs of Zion. We know not what these other songs may have been: but we have at all events presumptive reason to surmise, that the present Psalm was written, or in the case of too strong assertion—may have been written, by the Korhites, for this resuscitated Passover of the King of Judah, to give embodiment and expression to the inward aspirations of the worshipping throngs. As such, let us now ponder it:—as such, let us keep before our mental eye these scattered travellers; as from the distant Naphtali—the border-land of Lebanon—they emerge on their pilgrimage, until they stand within the gates of the elect metropolis.

May the sentiments of the Psalm be echoed by many lowly festive worshippers here. May we, too, as children of Zion, be joyful in our King.

Let us confine ourselves at present, to this one aspect of the Psalm, as containing a description of the Pilgrim's (or in our case the Communicant's) *journey to the Feast*.

This is contained in the opening portion selected: what may be more correctly called the first and second *strophes*. As the wayfarer commences his journey, or starts in company with a few fellow-

Israelites, his heart kindles into emotion at the thought of once more worshipping the God of his fathers in the oldest of their sacred rites, and that too within the ancestral Shrine:—"How amiable (how lovable, how beautiful) are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God!" In our authorised version, these worshippers are represented as envying the sparrow or swallow who have built their nests in the eaves of the Temple, or under its altars. The figure, however, is very simple and expressive in its application, without having recourse to a somewhat strange and unnatural rendering. The writer would seem rather to take the image of these two birds sinking into their woodland nest for repose, merely as an emblem of the blessed rest and peaceful enjoyment anticipated in entering within the Gates of the Sanctuary. "Yea, as the sparrow finds out an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; so," (with a significant ellipsis) "so—Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God."* The traveller pursues his way till we may suppose him to have reached a

* "It is very unlikely that sparrows and swallows and birds of any kind should be permitted to build their nests, and hatch their young, in or about altars, which were kept in a state of greatest purity; and where perpetual fires were kept for the purpose of sacrifice, &c."—*Dr. Adam Clarke*. See also Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms: and similar remarks by Bossuet, quoted by Dr. Bonar and Mr. Thrupp, *in loco*. "The House of God is to him" (the worshipper) "what its house and its nest are to the little bird."—*Hengstenberg*.

resting-place. As he pauses, leaning on his staff under some shady oak or terebinth, still they are anticipations of the festal day—the hallowed courts—which occupy his mental vision; and he breaks forth into the soliloquy, “Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be still praising Thee!” But the staff is resumed. Onwards he proceeds; or, it may be, we have already suggested, as one of a caravan. They have now come to a gloomier part of the road. The scenery around them wears a more desolate aspect, and tinges for the moment their own thoughts with sadness. They have reached “*the Valley of Baca*”—“the Valley of weeping” or “the Valley of the weeping trees”—a valley still pointed out on the way to Jerusalem: supposed by some to have been full of a peculiar moisture-distilling tree—“nature’s tear-drops” falling from its pendent branches. At all events it was, to use a modern oriental word, a dry and sombre *waddy*;—the sun above poured on their heads his burning arrows, and their lips were parched with thirst. But even here, their spirits rise and their songs ascend. The God of the pilgrims has made “the wilderness pools of water, and the dry land springs of water.” He has changed that scorched “Valley of the weeping tree” into a Well. The clouds which had gathered gloomily on the hill-tops around—screening the sunshine—burst in blessing: and down the slopes the streams with their glad music descend. The welcome boon has already filled its waterless troughs and ridges. In the place they least expected, weeping has been changed into joy. Baca has become as Elim. God has sent a plentiful rain,

whereby He has refreshed His heritage when they were weary. They can sing with joyful lips—"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them; who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." The Valley is at last traversed; and in due time there are indications that the journey is drawing to a close. The groups are increasing (v. 7). "They go from strength to strength," possibly, as that may be rendered, 'from company to company;' or 'from halting-place to halting-place.' Group is added to group; larger and yet larger grows the caravan; louder and yet louder swells the song. And now, Temple and tower and Holy Mount rise conspicuous to view. Their glowing anticipations are on the point of fulfilment. The City of Solemnities is reached;—its Gates open to the weary travellers—"Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (v. 7.) And, beautiful for situation (then as now), on the sides of the north, is "the City of the Great King!"

My friends, is there here, in any feeble measure, a picture of ourselves this day? As the Israel of God, can we enter into the ecstatic language of these pilgrims of old as they came up to Hezekiah's restored courts? Specially observe the keynote of their song: what it was that formed the burden of their intensest aspirations. It was *to meet Jehovah*:—*to "see God in His Sanctuary."* Many a heart among these thousands doubtless beat high at the prospect of gazing for the first time on the Holy City, so full of lofty and sacred associations. But while there was much in the external glory of its Temple-Courts to thrill and solemnise;

while they might well gaze with profound and reverential devotion on "the altar of God;" it was "God, their exceeding joy," who formed the burning centre of their desires and yearnings. The recorded promise uppermost in their thoughts was this,—*"There I will meet with thee, and will commune with thee from off the mercy seat."* See, how in our Psalm, the same longing is expressed and repeated!—"How amiable are *Thy* tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: *my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" "Blessed are they that dwell in *Thy* house: they will be still praising *Thee.*" "Their strength is in *Thee.*" They appear in Zion, but it is "*before God!*" Is this the chief and most ardent aspiration in the heart of each worshipper and each communicant now before me? It is not attractive service, nor gorgeous ceremonial, nor external symbolism; nay, nor formulated doctrine and dogma, the soul desiderates; but a *living* Being. "I know," says St. Paul in words often misquoted, and in the misquotation their sense and beauty mutilated, "*I know*" (not *in* whom), but "*I know Whom I have believed.*" It was not sects, nor creeds, nor churches, nor ecclesiastical organisations that this dying hero clung to in the hour of departure as he had done in life; but the glorious *Person* of the divine Emmanuel; the living Presence of the ever-living Saviour,—the Brother, the Friend on the Throne, whom he had learnt to love more dearly than all the world beside. Is it so with us? Is our prayer and longing, to-day, that of him who first celebrated the Hebrew passover, "I beseech Thee, *show me Thy glory*"? Do the glowing

words of another Psalm form the exponent of our feelings and desires—"O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek *Thee*; my soul thirsteth for *Thee*; my flesh longeth for *Thee* in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see *Thy* power and *Thy* glory, so as I have seen *Thee* in the Sanctuary"?

A *second* reflection occurs. Diverse and manifold, we may feel sure, were the feelings of individual worshippers among the Hebrew throngs of old, as they pursued their journey along the Palestine highways. These only too truly and faithfully reflect our own varied and chequered experiences. Some there are amongst us on the hill-tops of gladness, the "Delectable mountains;" Nature's spring-time clothing every valley, and making its pastures sing for joy. The early or latter rain coming down on flower and tree and meadow, and causing them to sparkle like gems in the radiant sunlight. With others, it is some Valley of Baca. Clouds have gathered. The moral landscape is not spring blossoms, but autumn leaves; bared stems; branches scattered with hail and storm. Some have to tell of blighted affections, narrowed circles, the pride and prop of the homestead fallen:—fellow travellers of bygone Paschal seasons no longer at their side: voices missed in the caravan. They could almost sit down under the gloom of these weeping trees, and hang their harps on the cypress branches.

But whatever be your experience, even though the sad and weeping one may predominate, you will have rich consolation in this appointed means of grace. May you have "the early rain" in coming to the Table, and "the latter rain" in returning from it;—com-

munion with Christ, who is Himself, in the manifold phases and revelation of His grace and mercy, as "Rivers of water in a dry place." O Happy pilgrims and Christian communicants, spoken of in this Pilgrim-psalm,—how all-sufficient is your "strength!" Every pilgrim needs a staff, yours is a Saviour-God. Your strength is in Him. As the sparrow and the swallow here spoken of, flee from the windy storm and tempest, and sink in peace in their nests; so may you find increasing repose,—it is ratified to you to-day, in the completed work of your glorious and glorified Redeemer;—the true "Cleft" for God's hidden-ones. A communion-table is one of His own appointed resting-places for His spiritual Israel, where He recruits their souls and opens to them wells of refreshment. It was the custom of the Jewish paschal worshippers, in going to the City of Solemnities, to be arrayed in new attire:—new garments adorned their bodies, new sandals bound their feet. Be it yours to have on, not for the transient sacramental season only, but as your habitual attire, the garment of holiness and love and new obedience: to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; having a more single undivided trust in Jesus; a greater willingness to bear His cross,—greater joy at the prospect of sharing His crown. "The swallow a nest." The swallow—Is not that a bird of passage: here to-day, away to-morrow to sunnier climes? Be this your constantly realised feeling, that you are *swallow-like*; migratory; the present a state of transition. Soon you will be away from earth's wintry skies to your Heavenly home, to build your nest in the golden eaves of the Eternal Sanctuary!

Brother Pilgrims and Fellow-Communicants, how happy your prospects, alike present and future: for time and for eternity! *Present*:—You have here the assurance and guarantee, in every stage of your appointed journey, that the Lord God will prove “a sun and shield”—a sun to gladden, a shield to protect; withholding from you nothing that is truly “good” (verse 11). Thus with His own blessing resting upon you; and under the guidance of the double name, “God of Hosts and God of Jacob” (verse 8): whether “Bacas” of sorrow or “Elims” of delight be yours; whether you have to pass through valleys of weeping trees, or ways clustering with amaranthine flowers; you *will*, you *must* be blest. The *Future*!—Oh, if *a* day—*one* day—thus spent in God’s courts is better than a thousand, what will be the Eternal day? No Valley or Valleys of tears; no vacant seats, no absent guests; a long *for ever*! To take up the sweet refrain of this psalm which has trembled on our lips during the services of an earthly Sabbath, and to sing it everlastingly:—
“*O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!*”

IV.

SUNDAY EVENING.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

“Grow in grace.”—2 Peter iii. 18.



PROGRESS is a great law in the universe of God. Nothing either in the world of mind or matter is stationary, with One exception. In the midst of His vast material creation, and of the myriads of His spiritual intelligences, God alone never knew and never *can* know what progress is. He being infinitely perfect, is incapable alike of *decrease* or *increase* in bliss, knowledge, power, glory. It is well known that the familiar river of Egypt possesses this peculiarity amid its compeers, that during a course of more than a thousand miles to its delta, it is indebted to not a single rill or tributary. While the other rivers of the world, issuing as tiny streamlets from their mountain-bed or glacier-cradle, are swollen with innumerable such, ere they reach the ocean; this father of earthly rivers, as he sweeps by the tombs of Memphis and the minarets of Cairo, has received no accession to his volume during all that vast distance he has majestically traversed.*

* Many years after this sentence was written, I give the more

So (with reverence we say it) is it with the Supreme Being, the great Father of all. While others, constituting His offspring, are susceptible of progress,—of receiving fresh rills, fresh accessions of intelligence and happiness, *He* remains from everlasting to everlasting unchangeably the same. The angels who excel in strength, we believe are still more and more excelling,—reaching higher and yet higher stages of advancement,—nearer and still nearer to God; and yet, the nearer they come, feeling more the infinite and untravelled distance separating between Creator and created. The saints—the redeemed from the earth—will, we doubt not, through all eternity be progressing in the divine life and likeness, growing in grace, climbing from height to height and altitude to altitude. But though approaching always nigher the infinite Brightness—that brightness still being “light inaccessible and full of glory:”—the confession ever made, as each new eminence is attained—“*Between us and Thee, O God, there is a great gulf fixed!*”

This, however, is growth in Glory. Let us descend for a little from the *heavenward* to the *earthward* contemplation to which the Apostle summons us; when, (speaking of progress in the Church below) he urges on his readers to “grow in grace.”

We are met at once by similar analogies in nature.

accurate and circumstantial account of Sir Samuel Baker:—“The vast deserts, which commence at Cairo, form an unbroken line which extends to the river Atbara upon the 17 deg. north latitude, the first affluent that adds its waters to the independent stream, which flows through 1200 miles of sands, unnourished by a tributary, until it meets the sea.”—*Times*, Dec. 1883.

We cannot fail to note the constant manifestations in the outer world of this law of progress or advancement: that the Creator and Ruler does nothing suddenly; rather that His vast processes move on silently—slowly—imperceptibly. Let the heavens declare this “glory of God” in the grandeur of its progressive operations. We need no other illustration than the breaking of the morning light and its brightening into perfect day. If we sought more recondite testimony and illustration, we might find it in what astronomers tell us of the process in the great planetary system, by which, as was the case with our own earth, vast globes like Jupiter and Saturn, from “liquid seething masses of fiery heat,” as they at present appear to be, are, in all probability, being gradually consolidated, till an outer crust is formed to fit them for becoming living habitations. Is it the vegetable world? On a minuter but not less real scale, how gradual the development! First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The inserted grain does not rush up all at once, and become immediately ready for the sickle: it is matured by the husbandman’s laborious culture. After a long appliance of *means*—moistening rains, gentle dews, fructifying heat—that tender seed struggles upwards through the superincumbent clods to the gladsome light. Then comes a fresh conflict with atmospheric influences:—But *on* it progresses. Spring nurses the embryo blade; Summer smiles on the bursting ear; Autumn opens her lap to receive from the sickle the full corn in the ear. It is Nature’s great parable on the law of advancement in the material world. May I quote the child-words—

“ ‘Little by little,’ an acorn said,
As it slowly sank in its mossy bed,
‘Little by little’ each day it grew,
‘Little by little’ it sipped the dew ;
Day after day and year after year
‘Little by little’ the leaves appear ;
Till its branches are spreading far and wide,
And the mighty oak is the forest’s pride.”

What grows suddenly, dies suddenly. The ever welcomed snow-drop rushes up from its bulb in a few weeks, but its life-time is as brief.

In *animal* life, we see the same law in operation. To take at once the highest type in sentient being. The Infant does not attain, in a moment, the full growth and dignity of manhood ; like the ancient Greek’s ideal of human perfection in the case of their patron goddess, said to have sprung at once, fully panoplied, from the head of Jupiter. It is a progressive development. The bones and muscles and sinews grow with the child’s growth and strengthen with its strength ; till the helpless arm that can scarce grasp the toy in its cradle, is, in the course of years, able to sustain the ponderous weight : it may be to ply the hammer, or guide the plough, and deal or parry the warrior’s blow.

Turn to the world of *mind* : there is similar progressive development there. The lisping stammerings, the playful prattle of infancy, are succeeded by the buoyancy of childhood. This again merges into the thoughtfulness and high aspirations of hopeful youth. Then comes manhood, with its maturer judgment and experience and power : and every several and successive stage in that mental history is one of *progress*.

Mark, yet once more, it is not by one vast bound that what intervenes can be ascended and the summit reached; but by the same slow day-by-day, step-by-step process. By no fitful efforts, but by many an hour of toilsome application, have the great masterminds, who guide the destinies of empires and of mankind, been disciplined and matured. The statesman, the philosopher, the historian, the man of science, can traverse in memory those years of student life, when in the secluded chamber the midnight lamp met the hues of morning. When others were slumbering, or pursuing the phantom of pleasure, there they were, storing the mental citadel with treasures which at some future day would make the earth they live in wiser and better.

Now in all these, and manifold other illustrations which might be given, is there no analogy in the spiritual and divine life? Yes. This law of advance and progress—exemplified in the outer world, and in the constitution and growth of our own bodily and mental frames—illustrates God's dealing in the higher economy. We speak of "*the life of faith*"—"life in the Soul." Here also is there an infancy, youth, nonage, manhood, maturity. Peter in his First Epistle speaks of "*babes in Christ*"—those who are to be fed on milk. They could not bear stronger nutriment. They are in the earliest, the incipient stage of the spiritual existence. A brother Apostle speaks of "*little children*:" "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John ii. 13); of "*young men*": "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in

you" (1 John ii. 14); of "*fathers*"—saints grown grey in the service of their Heavenly Master: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning" (v. 14). We find our blessed Lord Himself recognising these same stages of advancement in the case of His own disciples: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" (John xiv. 9). And to the same effect, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12).—As if He had said, "There is a time coming—an ulterior stage in your spiritual existence, when you *will* be able to understand and appreciate these mysteries of the kingdom,—but *not yet!*"

Perhaps in the case of none of the Apostolic band was this spiritual progress more perceptible and better illustrated, than in the case of him who penned the words of our text. See him at first the "little child." As a child, petulant, fretful. See him in full manhood; attained to much, yet having much to learn; full of rash impulses—sensitive, impetuous. Venturing on the water, yet sinking; faithful, yet fearful; loving, yet doubting: and at last, frailest moment of all, when that devoted Master most needed his loyal adhesion and sympathy, becoming a recreant and renegade. But mark him in the mellowed sunset of his career. That sun had waded, during life's long day, through mist and cloud and tempest, alternately brightened and obscured; how tranquil now is his "going down" behind the mountains of Israel! Calm as an infant that has tossed itself asleep on its mother's lap, or as some well-known flowers fold their leaves when the

night-shadows begin to fall! As we read of him in the gospels, we meet there with a bold, fiery, passionate soul: the grace and prayer of Christ alone between him and ruin:—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). Thirty years after this, he wrote his Epistles. How changed the man! we scarce recognise his personal identity. How grace has moulded him, softened, subdued, chastened him! His every breathing in these letters is gentleness and love. He had himself felt the benefit of the purifying, refining furnace; and therefore thus he writes:—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 7). See, as has been noted by more than one writer, how his *humility* appears in undesigned coincidences. We know that he had much to do in the writing of St. Mark's Gospel. What says he of himself there? Everything is suppressed that would savour of self; everything brought in that would humble him and exalt his Lord. His walking on the water—*suppressed*; the special blessing Jesus gave to him as "Simon Bar-jonas," recorded in Matthew, *suppressed*; the word "bitterly," inserted by the first evangelist when he records the intensity of Peter's repentant sorrow when "he went out and wept," *suppressed*; and more than all, that dark sorrowful story of his denial is more fully recorded in this second Gospel than in any of the others. Then see when he comes to *die*:—What is the testimony of the man

who was once afraid of death?—he who shook with terror in the water as he felt himself sinking:—he who cowered with more than womanish fears when his Lord was buffeted, lest he might be dragged to share His cross and sufferings! Hear the old man speak! Hear the softened, calmed, heavenly-minded apostle, with his grey-hairs and furrowed brow:—how he writes about *death*—that event so terrible to all. It has lost its dread. “I must put off,” says he, “this *my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me*” (2 Peter i. 14). Christ showed him *how* he was to die. He had foretold the painful and ignominious manner of his decease—that he was to follow Him in *crucifixion*; meet the King of Terrors in his most revolting form. But how does the aged champion contemplate this?—He speaks of it as the laying aside of an *old cloak* (so the word may mean)—a useless outer garment! To speak so of death, and such a death, showed surely that this “righteous man”—once called by his Lord “fearful” and of “little faith,”—once a poor reed shivering in the blast, had now, by the power and growth of divine grace, become bold as a lion!

This moral progress, so singularly illustrated in the case of him who exhorts us in our text, is (must be) the distinguishing characteristic, more or less, of all God’s true people. And as there were seasons in the life of the Apostle, so also are there in ours, when a gracious and salutary impulse is given to spiritual advancement. The Lord’s Supper is intended to be a *strengthening* as well as a *commemorating* Ordinance. The nutritive and sustaining qualities in the natural elements of bread and wine are doubtless intended to

be symbolic of a higher truth,—that of feeding and stimulating the graces of the Christian character—promoting sanctification and holiness. Our Church will never be arraigned for any unwarrantable leanings towards what is known as “Sacramentarian efficacy.” But a Standard whose authority we all own and reverence, leaves us no doubt what its compilers considered the relation which the Divine rite bears to our text to-day, as being one special means of fostering and promoting the life of God in the Soul. We are “by faith made partakers of His body and blood, with all their benefits to our spiritual nourishment and *growth in grace.*”

Yet, while, we trust, this divine growth may form the ardent aspiration, the grand practical result of our hallowed season, let no humble Christian, let no believing communicant, leave these sacred courts under a misapprehension. Let none go away cast down or discouraged, under some humbling conviction that with them there has been no such thing as advancement in grace: that relapse rather than progress—from weakness to weakness rather than “from strength to strength”—is and has been their mournful and saddening experience. Who among us, brethren, is free from the haunting suspicion, that if tried and tested by this spiritual growth, we would have good cause, humbled and conscience-stricken, to evade the scrutiny?

But are there not many of God’s true people who are apt, in this respect also needlessly, to write bitter things against themselves? We believe, indeed, that often the Christian may *seem* to himself to be retrograding, when all the while it is the reverse: no

apparent continuity of progression, yet ultimately and really periods of advance. You may at times have stood on the sea-shore, and watched the incoming tide:—wave after wave laving the beach; only to retreat into the bosom of the former wave. It seemed receding; murmuring for a moment at your feet—and then back again to nestle in its watery bed. As, however, the briny tears came sweeping over the sand or shingle, you saw that the ripple-marks were gradually diminishing; that, despite of these refluent waves, the tide was making, and the boat moored dry on the shore would be soon buoyant on the water. So it is with the ebbings and the flowings in the spiritual life. You may be ever and anon in doubt and despondency. Temptation after temptation, like wave upon wave, may tell of nothing but apparent relapse. The tide of the divine life may appear to recede; while, in truth and reality, watched by the unerring discriminating Eye above—it is rising: the old marks of sin are being submerged under the advancing waves. “The righteous shall hold on his way.” “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.” “He giveth more grace.” “He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of the Lord Jesus.”

“Why is that plant”—ask this question of the experienced gardener—“making no advance? Though healthy in appearance, its growth seems arrested.” “Nay,—not so,” would be his reply. “Externally, and to the outward eye, it makes no progress. But it does better: it is mooring its unseen roots all the firmer and deeper in the soil.”

And now, what remains, in closing, but to exhort and encourage you, as God's votive and covenanting people, to aspire after increasing attainments. By startling providences, as well as by revolving seasons, we are solemnly reminded that our present fleeting opportunities will soon be gone, and gone for ever. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Time is rushing on swift-winged to Judgment. He puts no arrest on his revolving wheels. He stops no grain in the diminishing sand-heap. Day follows day; Sabbath treads on the heels of Sabbath; Communion season on Communion season; and the sun, like a vast pendulum, as he swings from East to West, seems to proclaim,—“Nearer Eternity!” “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” “Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye *shall* reap if ye faint not!”

Members of the Sacramental host of the Great Captain of Salvation! be yours especially the noble resolution of the man, who exhibited on the vastest and grandest scale the practical power of the resolution of our text: “I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do;—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!”

“By the grace of God we are what we are.” May we leave His courts to-day, feeling that by that same grace we may grow into something higher, nobler, holier, diviner still.

“Your vows renewed ; go seek His mercy only,
To arm the trembling spirit for the strife ;
Ye shall not fight the world’s great battle lonely,
Soldiers of Christ, ye bear a charmed life !


“Go with sweet thoughts of Jesus, and in meekness
Take up the cross and follow in His way ;
His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness,
His GRACE shall be your comfort and your stay.”

V.

SUNDAY MORNING.

THE EXALTATION OF THE HUMANITY.

“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”—Psalm viii. 4, 5.

 HIS Psalm, like many others, has a twofold application. No simple reader can have failed to be struck in perusing it, with a mingling up, throughout, of reference to “Man,” and to some one Infinitely Greater. In the first verse of our text, the sacred writer turns from the consideration of God’s wonders in the starry heavens, to the favoured being on earth upon whom He has lavished such distinguishing tokens of His love. *And yet*, immediately after, he appears by prophetic inspiration to blend his contemplation of humanity in the creature, with the contemplation of humanity in the future Incarnate WORD. It would be superfluous to occupy time in showing that the passage is inapplicable to man alone; and how the expressions, “Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour,” “made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands,” “put all things under

his feet," have a higher and diviner signification. Any such proof is unnecessary, as we have inspired comment and authority, in the second chapter of Hebrews, in applying it to Christ.

In discoursing, therefore, with God's blessing, on the words, I would have you to bear in mind, as their most interesting feature, this somewhat remarkable dual reference; the identifying, so to speak, of the two humanities. Come, and let us with devout reverence meditate on the theme thus opened up; for it is that which we are to have set before us to-day, in visible sacramental memorial,—“the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.”

Let our thoughts be directed to these successive views of the exaltation of the Humanity—

- I. *In the Divine purpose.*
- II. *In the Incarnation of the Son of God.*
- III. *In the Ascension of Christ.*
- IV. *At the Day of Judgment.*
- V. *Through all Eternity.*

I. The exaltation of the Humanity *in the Divine purpose.*

It formed the great Divine idea, so to speak, ere the earth was made, and when God dwelt alone in the solitudes of infinite space.

Amid the countless worlds which were in future to throng His universe, there was one selected to become the scene of an unparalleled manifestation of love: the Almighty Creator Himself, condescending to assume the Human nature in union with the Divine, in order to exalt that nature, fallen and degraded, to glory and

to honour. We have dim and obscure intimations of this sublime conception given us in Scripture. There are passages of light which burst upon us here and there, from the recesses of eternity, unfolding the grandeur of the human destiny, as contemplated before the birth of time. Although on no account vindicating such an interpretation by any strong assertion, it has at all events been regarded by expositors as possible, that in a well-known Bible chapter, under the personification of Wisdom, Christ Himself may be regarded as announcing that "from everlasting, or ever the earth was, His delights were with the sons of men:" as if coming down, while yet our globe was without form and void, to visit the great theatre of His soul's travail and of man's salvation (Prov. viii. 23-31). In a still earlier Scripture, the Blessed Trinity, in their ineffable counsels, seem to intimate the development of some august plan in connection with the world's creation:—"Let us make man after our own image;" words which have a primary reference to the formation of the former in a state of purity and innocence, and thereby a reflection of the divine Original, the uncreated God;—but which can alone, in their full complementary significance, apply to Jesus the Great *Ideal* of Humanity, the Perfect Man: He who by distinctive pre-eminence is "THE Image of the Invisible." If we have reason to believe that the new-born Earth arrested the interested contemplation of other Orders of Intelligence,—little at all events would they dream of so surpassing an honour in store for it: how the first speck of new-born light which appeared, penetrating chaos, fell on the realm an

Incarnate God was to redeem: in which He was to assume the nature of a finite creature and therein enshrine the Infinite. As it gradually became more luminous, the brooding darkness dispelling, the sun shining on its fresh verdure,—well might the Morning Stars, in joyous jubilee-strains, sing together, and all the Sons of God shout for joy!

Let us contemplate—

II. The exaltation of the Humanity *in the Incarnation of the Son of God.*

“Manifest in the flesh!” How magnificent does fallen nature appear, even in its ruins, in thus becoming the very sanctuary and residence of Deity. The traveller visits with emotion places consecrated as haunts of the mighty dead. He reverently lingers amid the broken columns and capitals of antiquity, associating their very desolation with illustrious sages and heroes—names traced imperishably on the tablets of history. How sublime, we may almost say awe-inspiring, the thought, that every man has within himself a Temple with associations, nay, with realities, incomparably grander: that the Human spirit, wrecked by sin, is the very habitation in which Deity dwelt for three and thirty years of humiliation on earth! “Destroy this Temple,” said Christ, “and in three days I will raise it up. He spake of the Temple of His body.” *His body!* It was a fleshly tabernacle like yours and mine, with this exceptional characteristic, that it was “yet without sin.” By Him Humanity was ennobled, hallowed, consecrated, in its every phase and condition. He consecrated *infancy*,

by Himself becoming the Babe of Bethlehem. He consecrated *poverty*, by Himself being emphatically "the houseless One," "not having where to lay His head." He consecrated *bereavement*, by the tears shed at Bethany's grave, and the words of comfort spoken in Bethany's darkened household. He consecrated *suffering* and *pain* and *trial*, by the wave on wave that swept over His own guiltless head, till His mangled body was left, like a wreck on the desert shore. He consecrated *death* itself, when the walls of the Temple collapsed, wherein dwelt the ever-blessed God. Ay, He consecrated Humanity's last resting-place:—the very grave cannot be dis severed from the earthly tabernacle which the great Lord of heaven condescended to occupy. Unspeakable honour to put on the nature of a fallen being! Glorious indeed might have been the exaltation of Humanity if Adam had remained staunch in his allegiance; and the nature he received pure and spotless from his Maker been transmitted uncontaminate to his posterity. There would have been the beauteous spectacle of a world tenanted by sinless creatures; every bosom filled to the brim with love to its Creator, and no room for one shadow to dim or darken. But, more glorious and wondrous far, that exaltation, when "very God of very God" deigned to convert a ruined haunt into His own presence-chamber, and transform it into what is divine! If condescension be a relative term, and increase in proportion to the distance and disparity between its objects—where is there condescension equal to this? We have read of kings on earth visiting the beggar's hovel: there is condescension here. ✓

But what is such after all? One finite being visiting another finite being, one mortal visiting another mortal. But we have presented to us in our present contemplation, the God seated on the throne of the universe, coming down to the outcast and the perishing! Brethren, we cannot estimate the wonders of such condescension, because there is no scale by which it can be measured. There are certain existing relations between everything else in creation. There is a certain relation and proportion between the giant mountain and the grain of sand. There is a certain relation and proportion between the drop of water and the boundless ocean. There is a certain relation and proportion between the sun and the tiny taper which glimmers into nothingness in his beams. There is even an imaginable relation and proportion between the seraph before the throne and the insect whose lifetime is a brief hour, for they are both creatures, though at the antipodes of being. But there can be no measurable —no possible relation or proportion between the Great God and the vile sinner, between Deity and dust! When I think that in a bodily framework like my own, only untainted by evil, there dwelt the Adorable Jehovah, “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity:”—that “He took not on Him the nature of angels;” that He selected, not the angelic form or condition to ennoble and exalt, but “the seed of Abraham;” well may I exclaim with the Psalmist in devoutest amazement—“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour!”

III. Let us note the exaltation of the Humanity *in the Ascension of Christ.*

Our human nature occupies the *Central throne of Heaven*: If great be the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh," we may with reverence add as a counterpart, "Great is the mystery of godliness," Man manifest on the throne of God! If it be an amazing truth, Jesus bore our suffering nature on earth: it is a verity, surely no less marvellous, Jesus bears our glorified nature in the upper sanctuary. When "the gates lifted up their heads," and the King of Glory travelled through the burning ranks, it was before *Humanity* in union with Deity they bowed as He passed. It is in that glorified Human nature He there still lives and loves. Take one among several kindred visions of the Apostle of Patmos,—that of the white-robed and palm-bearing multitude. The central figure in that inspired picture of pictures is THE LAMB in the midst of the throne, leading them, and feeding them—conducting them from pasture to pasture and from fountain to fountain. What is this, but the blessed assurance, alike to His Church triumphant and militant, of the Redeemer's undying Manhood; that though reigning as King of kings—God over all, blessed for ever—He still retains the Brother's eye, and the Brother's love, and the Brother's heart? Nay more, as Head and Representative of His people, His glorified Humanity forms the pledge of their own ultimate exaltation. He, the first sheaf in the harvest presented in the Heavenly Temple, is the earnest of myriad sheaves that are to follow. Where He is, His people also are to be. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may

be fashioned like unto His glorious body." "His glorious body!" or as it is rather rendered, "the body of His glory." It is the mighty mould into which our fallen nature is to be recast. It is the divine model after which the defaced and mutilated block is to be shaped into eternal symmetry and beauty. It is the glorious Archetype, in conformity with which the mirror, shattered in a thousand pieces in Eden, is to be completely reconstructed:—each broken fragment, each ransomed sinner—the lowliest, the humblest—like a piece of polished glass, to reflect a perfect image of the Lord.

My friends, what exaltation is not this, to the nature of Humanity, alike present and future? *Present*. "Christ the first fruits:"—His divine human form, once pierced with thorns and racked in torture, now, in language of lofty metaphor, wearing many crowns! In *prospect*:—the multitude which no man can number, ransomed with His own precious blood; now, it may be, despised, dishonoured, disesteemed; but who shall then be raised from obscurity and scorn, "set among princes, and made to inherit crowns and thrones of glory." Oh! with what a grandeur is the meanest and poorest child of Adam thus invested; if within his clay-walls, as a *Saint of God*, he be a partaker of the Divine Nature;—that nature elevating the human to a pitch of greatness which leaves all earthly distinction immeasurably behind!

IV. Let us advert to the exaltation of the Humanity at the *Day of Judgment*.

"The Father hath given Him authority to execute

judgment also, *because* He is *the Son of Man*." "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that Man* whom He hath ordained." Here, again, it is Humanity exalted, on the throne of final reckoning;—*The Man* Christ Jesus.

Who can unfold the glory which will then accrue to our nature, when "every eye shall see Him?"—the irreversible sentence going forth from the lips of glorified Humanity. My hearers, be it yours to exult in the anticipation, that there will be seated on that august tribunal, not a Being of awful, inapproachable majesty,—whose presence would blind and dazzle and confound,—but, once more, a Brother in your own nature! The cry of Jewish mockery and Gentile scorn which resounded of old around His cross, will then form your note of triumph—the secret of your joy when gazing on His throne,—"*Behold the Man!*" Behold the representative Man! Behold the once-suffering Man! Behold the righteous Man! Behold the sympathising Man! Behold now the exalted and the crowned Man! "We know," says the beloved disciple, in a transport of holy joy, "that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." From the same lips which in trembling accents on Calvary once called him "Son," he will hear the benediction and welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." On that great and terrible day, when the wrath of God shall sweep away all refuges of lies, the designation given Him by the prophet, so cheering to the tempest-tossed soul on earth, will lose none of its comfort *then*:—"A Man"

(A MAN) "shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!"

V. Once more, contemplate the exaltation of the Humanity *throughout all Eternity*.

Christ's mediatorial reign, with regard to His enemies, will end at a Day of judgment; for we read, "He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet:" and "then shall He deliver up" (that part of His kingdom) "to God, even the Father." His sovereignty with regard to them shall be merged into that of God absolute. But of the increase of His mediatorial government "there shall be no end." The Humanity He wore on earth will continue evermore on the throne. The divine Father, by immutable covenant, invested Him, as Mediator, with "length of days for ever and ever." Unto principalities and powers in heavenly places will be made known by the Church (under her Great Representative Head), "the manifold wisdom of God."

Let me ask you, dear friends, are you prepared, after these imperfect meditations, to echo the exclamation of the Psalmist? Will it be that which will circulate from heart to heart while you surround as guests to-day the Table of communion, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Rise to a sense of your distinguished, your peerless privileges in Christ! Oh, if such be the dignity bestowed on human nature in the Person of the Adorable Head, need we wonder at the pre-eminent and surpassing honours set forth in Scripture as in store for the members? Angels are

sons of God by creation; but ransomed man becomes a son of God by filiation, adoption,—union with his glorified Lord. From being at the base of the pyramid, lying among the *débris* and ruins, see where redeeming love has placed him! “To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me on My throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne.” Having this hope in Him, (the hope of seeing Him as He is) are we purifying ourselves even as He is pure? “Wherefore, brethren,” says the Apostle, “partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” “Consider!” It is an emphatic word. Literally “gaze” on the Lord Jesus. It is the artist copying, line by line, and feature by feature; not expecting the transcript to be perfect here (for that it cannot be), but seeking to approximate if he can do no more; looking forward to that blessed time when, without one speck of sin and sorrow to mar or blemish, “we shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”


Let us go, meanwhile, to His holy Ordinance, with the earnest determination and the recorded vow—
“This God shall be our God for ever and ever!”

VI.

SUNDAY EVENING.

A FLIGHT OF DOVES.

"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"—Isa. lx. 8.

HE whole of this chapter of the great evangelical Prophet is replete with sublime imagery. It forms in itself a unique Poem, a gallery of successive pictures delineating the golden age of the Messiah. His Church, resplendent with the glories of her King, is represented as growing and expanding, age by age, till a whole world is seen hastening to lay tribute offerings at His feet, and to welcome Him to the throne of universal empire.

Several of its verses, taken by themselves, might form befitting themes to sum up the sacred services of a Communion Sunday.* We need indeed go no further than the opening exhortation, "Arise, shine;" sounding as it does like a clarion-note, a herald trum-

* The entire Chapter had been made the subject of exposition on the former part of the day. (See the writer's "Comfort ye, Comfort ye," chapters XXVI. and XXVII.) The present formed the "Closing Address" on that occasion.

pet in entering again the battle of life with refurbished armour, and the renewed vow of allegiance on the lip. "Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven." But we have been led, in preference, to select a different but equally expressive metaphor:—the sight which revealed itself to Isaiah, as he gazed down the vista of ages on the Church of the future. It is that of a flock, or rather flocks of doves, on the wing to their cotes. Jesus may well be regarded as the true House of safety: while Communicants, His covenant people, like these silver and golden plumaged doves, *flee* to Him for shelter, *trust* Him for shelter, *abide* in Him for shelter. May God help us to some appropriate meditations, in harmony with the simplicity of the emblem.

(1.) The first thought which the verse suggests, in connection with our Communion services, is that of *blissful association*. Can we fail to think of the Prophet's figure as symbolising what has occurred amongst us in this vast city to-day? varied churches and varied denominations engaged in celebrating the same sacred rite? We have, in and through its significant symbols, been looking and fleeing to the one only Saviour. As the dovecot may have its different apertures; so, each church retains its own denominational entrance. But the Glorious meeting-place, the spiritual Shelter, is the same. The windows are diverse, but there is a blessed identity in the hallowed haunt itself: nay in the day, and hour, and occasion of flight. The summoning bells have rung their varied tones: but there is a sweet harmony and concord in

the responsive chime of consecrated hearts—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" Clothed, we trust, in the one glorious plumage, and with wings bearing in the same direction, may we not imagine angels exclaiming, as they look down on the multitudes in this and in other places throughout our land, hastening to the figurative sacramental Ark—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

(2.) In connection with our sacred rite, the emblem of our text suggests a *public profession*. The Prophet is arrested; or possibly, in the poetical imagery here employed, a chorus of spectators—in which he veils his own personality—are arrested by the spectacle. The doves are not spoken of as flying under screen of night or darkness; neither were they beheld winging a solitary or circuitous flight, as if dreading and evading observation. But the mid-day sun looked down on a whole cloud of them, their golden iridescent plumage flashing in his beams.

Dear brethren, it is no unimportant or insignificant feature in your divinely-appointed Ordinance, this open dove-like flight to the Covenant Ark. In these times, when there is so much unworthy shame in espousing Christ's cause, ranging ourselves under His banner, and unfurling it before the world,—it is a noble thing, or rather a joyful privilege, to come boldly forward and avouch the Lord to be our God—making the public unhesitating avowal, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ:" like the man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, who, before all the multitude, went forth "walking and leaping and praising God"

(Acts iii. 8). "Them that honour Me, I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30). Doubtless Jesus will regard with a special complacency those who have, with willing, loving obedience, responded to His own dying command, and in the words of another verse of this chapter, "glorified Him in the House of His glory." Yes, as He looked down and saw this day, those who are the fruit of the travail of His soul;—as He beheld His people winging their flight to His Sacramental Table; may we not, with reverence, suppose Him joining in the angelic interrogation, and saying in the gladness of His own infinite heart—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" *

(3.) The cloud of doves, as here represented, betokens the *character of Christians and of Christian communicants*. They are, or ought to be, *dove-like*. The Dove has these among other characteristics:—

First. It is the complex symbol, in sacred poetry and art, of *peace and love, of meekness and gentleness, purity and harmlessness* (Cant. i. 15, vi. 9, Matt. x. 16). I may add, in the rude early Christian symbolism of the Roman catacombs, the Dove, as the bird of *hope*, is generally represented in connection, variously treated, with the olive branch. What a lesson for us all as believers in Jesus, and specially in rising from His Holy Supper, to carry away the resolution of

* A more emphatic rendering is given, in the Revised Version, to the Apostle's word in 1st Cor. xi. 26, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *proclaim* the Lord's death till He come."

imitating more than we have yet done, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ:" His kind, loving, unselfish, peaceful spirit! If, in the retrospect of past months, it may be of past years, we have to mourn the cherishing or the exhibition of unholy tempers and resentful feelings—unworthy passions that have held guilty sway over us,—let us form the determination, in God's strength, that henceforth we are to be more *Dove-like*—more like Him who was "meek and lowly in heart;"—"who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Moreover, recalling the Dove as the bird of *hope*; either perched on the branch of peace or bearing it in its mouth, what more befitting benediction to carry with you as you leave this sacred ground—"Now the God of *hope* fill you with all joy and *peace* in believing, that ye may abound in *hope*, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom xv. 13)?

A Second characteristic of the Dove is, that it is *swift of wing*. The Prophet saw them, not sailing like a cloud, or drifting like a cloud, but *flying*; borne along with whirlwind speed. The carrier dove is well known for the swiftness—the length and steadiness, of its arrowy course, surpassing the proverbial flight of the eagle. An Oriental writer mentions regarding it, that it never pauses; that when its wings are weary, it poises itself on one, whilst the other droops for a little by its side, and when rested, the unremitting flight is resumed. This, coupled with Isaiah's figure, surely suggests the *activities* of the Christian life. The believer is swift of wing to do God's service. The

religion you profess, and to which many have set their seal to-day, is not only a *being* good, but a *doing* good. Be always, like the dove, *soaring*. In a spiritual sense it is a safeguard and preservation against sin, not to remain with wings folded, but to mount on ministries of active service. It matters not what these services may be; for there are also, in this respect, many windows in the Ark,—many outlets of usefulness—diversities of gifts and consecration. Only “whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do* it with thy might.” To be on the wing is to be safe. To have the wings folded, sunning in the garish light, is often to be in peril. It is a striking and beautiful verse in Proverbs, “Surely in vain the net (of temptation) is spread in the sight of any bird,” or, as it is rendered in the margin of your Bibles—“in the sight of that which *moveth on the wing*.” Moving; resting not; making no perch of the world; but in the pure cloudless ethereal regions of faith and love and holiness, soaring ever higher to the home in the hills of God. “Who are these that *fly* as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?” *

(4.) The figure of the Dove fleeing to its window reminds and suggests, that it is a bird which requires a *safe shelter*. It does not, like some others, cower in hedgerows or furrows. The wild pigeon may build its

* This divine energy, in connection with the figure of the text, is brought out in the very earliest of Bible metaphors, where “the Spirit of God moved,” or, as that rather means in the Hebrew, “brooded (dove-like) on the face of the waters:” the significant symbol initiating successive manifestations of divine power in the work of creation.

nest on the forest tree ; but the tame one seeks its secure *dovecot*. The eastern dove, which had no artificial home, had its equally secure dwelling in the rock-clefts : " O my dove, that art *in the clefts of the rock* " (Sol. Song ii. 14.) A little way from the north-west shores of the Lake of Gennesaret there is a recess in the hills called the Wâdy Hyman," or " Valley of Doves," the sides of which are perforated with their retreats.

You who are Communicants have been fleeing anew to-day for refuge to the " Rock of Ages." You have come for a little season into this Ark of Ordinances, from work and duty, from roaming the needful fields of every-day occupation—shall we say to bathe afresh your ruffled, soiled plumage, in the Fountain of Salvation? Rather, you have desired, in one of His own appointed Sacraments, to hold nearer, dearer, and more confidential fellowship with Christ: realising more devoutly that in Him you have your best, securest, and happiest Home. Away from earth's troubles and anxieties, its sins and sorrows: in this glorious Rock-cleft you have been folding your weary wings. An earthly communion is the foretaste and foreshadow of a safer and more enduring shelter; the pledge of a happier and more blissful Sabbath, when you will sink into the crevices of the true Rock for ever!

It is a special characteristic of the Dove, that, however far it goes—though at a distance of hundreds of miles—it will fly back with unerring aim, sureness, and safety to its abode. So with "the dove of Christ." Every true believer, born of God,—born *from* above, and *for* above, through every cloud and tempest, will

reach at last the true Home on high. "The spirit shall return unto the God who gave it."

(5.) The cloud of Doves on wing to their windows, reminds one of *young communicants*. In the Septuagint, the words of this verse are remarkable, "Who are these that fly like doves with their young?" The doves fly to their dove-cot, but not alone, they have their offspring with them.

Not the least beautiful thing about a Communion-Sunday is the spectacle of young doves; those who have just risen from their early perches, the perches of the morning of life, and are winging their way, bright and unsoiled, to the Rock! If old communicants may be likened to the doves, whose wings the Psalmist speaks of as covered with "yellow gold" (golden with age); may we not compare young communicants to those wings, described in the same verse, as covered with *silver*; silvered over with the white shining of early piety and youthful consecration.

"Who are these that fly *like doves with their young*?" If a father or mother ever in their lives experience a sacred and hallowed joy, it surely is at the hour when their young ones are found by their side at the sacramental table. *Fleeing together*; wing touching wing; nearing together the same Ark: together in the clefts of the same Eternal Rock. Ay, for parents to feel, when in the course of nature they are constrained, with aged and disabled pinion, to drop out of the flight; or rather, when they come to enter finally the windows of that Dovecot from which there is no return,—that they will leave behind them those who

will pursue their way, year after year, to "the Ark of the testimony."

Oh! my dear young friends, you who are the young doves to-day, in this glorious flight, be true and faithful to your God. Keep your plumage untainted. Let no feather be soiled with sin. Many wings amongst us would have been swifter, more buoyant, more soaring, if they had not been broken or blemished by some former falls.

The cloud of doves spoken of in this verse, were ever getting nearer their windows. May this be so with you in a nobler spiritual sense; and may the familiar words be alike your prayer and your experience—

" Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee !"

(6.) One other thought is suggested, by the remembrance of a large class of those who are always to be found at the Sacrament of communion—I mean *the afflicted*.

This image of doves flying to their windows reminds of *storm*. They were seen *flying*; drifting along like a tempestuous cloud. The dove flies to its dovecot, or to the rock-clefts, when the storm is brewing; perhaps were it not for the tempest it might linger in the open field, and get entangled in the snare or gin of which we found the Wise man speaking. But the black cloud is in the heavens! the thunder is heard: the tempest moans: the rain torrents descend. On the wings of the tempest the timid creature directs its flight to the sheltering covert.

Sorrowing, afflicted ones! and especially any who, as communicants, partook of the sacred emblems in heaviness of spirit, bewailing the loss and absence of "those who are not," may not this be your sanctified experience of the Divine dealings? Has not that desolating storm, which tore down your cherished earthly dovecots and shelters, only led you to speed more swiftly, steadily, persistently, to the only Refuge that never can be assailed by the hurricanes of dire misfortune, or the darker, gloomier tempests of bereavement and death? Yes, mourning dove! this day too faithfully noting blanks amid the flock of living wings around you;—whether the silver-plumaged dove of youth missing the golden one of age, or the golden-plumaged ones of age missing their young:—rejoice if that "windy storm and tempest" has brought you closer to Jesus,—driven you from the perishable to the Imperishable, and attuned lip and heart more for the song of a sainted Minstrel:—

"I flutter, I struggle, I pant to be free,
I feel me a captive while banished from Thee:
A pilgrim and stranger the desert I roam,
And look on to Heaven and long to be home!

Ah, there the wild tempest for ever shall cease,
No billow shall ruffle that haven of peace:
'Temptation and trouble alike shall depart,
All tears from the eyes and all sin from the heart." *

It is by affliction God has always prepared His

doves for flight and for heaven. Without affliction, they might be grovellers for ever. It is by the thorn in the nest He drives them to the wing. They might otherwise have been content with a poorer portion. It is one of the finest of the old Assyrian myths or legends, that when their great Queen Semiramis, the founder of their empire, died, she was changed into a dove. How often does death—the death of beloved friends—work a similar transformation on bereaved souls! imparting to them the dove-like spirit, and the upward soaring! *

God grant that many amongst us, young and old, may have had the longing prayer answered to-day—“Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!” (Ps. lv. 6). From our present theme of meditation, with its pictures and suggestions of shelter and repose; from the emblems and tokens of redeeming love at the Sacramental Table; from all that our eyes have there seen of the Word of Life; from Him who has tuned our hearts, inspired our thoughts, and given significance to our vows; from His dying lips on the Cross, from His glorified lips on

* Keble's familiar lines in the “Christian Year” may here be recalled—

“Then fainting soul, arise and sing;
Mount, but be sober on the wing.
Till death the weary spirit free,
Thy God hath said—’Tis good for thee
To walk by faith and not by sight;
Take it on trust a little while;
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
In the full sunshine of His smile.”


the throne; hear we not His own blessed, dove-like balm-word, stealing on the breath of eventide as a chime from the upper Sanctuary—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST!"

VII.

SUNDAY MORNING.

CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES AT THE LAST SUPPER.

"Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?"—
St. Matt. xxvi. 20, 21, 22.

" ANCTIFY yourselves, for there is to be a feast of the Lord!"

Such was the wonted summons to the Jews of old on the occasion of their solemn festivals. The silver trumpets sounded, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel:" and blessed were the people who knew the joyful sound. With the prospect we have before us, to-day, of keeping the New Testament Sacramental memorial, I have selected these words as an appropriate theme for meditation. Let us gather with sacred interest around this scene in the upper chamber of Jerusalem, and may God the Holy Ghost direct, inspire, and sanctify our thoughts.

Let me speak of these four points:—

The rite celebrated.

The company assembled.

The announcement made.

The manner in which the announcement was received.

I THE RITE.

It was the Passover Supper. It would be altogether out of place here to examine a question which has given rise to conflicting opinions, whether the meeting of our Blessed Lord and His disciples described, was the actual commemorative Jewish feast; or whether, as from a comparison of dates there seems some grounds for surmising, it partook rather of the nature of a private observance in anticipation of another on the 14th day of the month Nizan; that date being held, with greater chronological accuracy, to have fallen on the following evening, corresponding with our Friday. The preponderating arguments, supported by most reliable authorities, seem to incline to the long accepted view that it was the actual Passover feast, the same that was being celebrated universally that night in Jerusalem. If so, it was the close of what must have been in all respects a remarkable day in the City of Solemnities. Within the walls, supplemented by tents or booths in the Valley of the Kedron and on the slopes and in the green hollows of Olivet, it is computed that two million of souls were assembled to keep the annual festival. Each family had to provide itself with a lamb, and take it to the Temple for sacrifice. Relays of priests were there standing in a row, with gold and silver basins, into which the blood of the animal was poured, while its carcass was returned to the owners, and by them prepared for the evening meal. At eventide came a hush of silence after the busy day—a day

noisy with the tramp of the multitudinous pilgrims, the bleating of the sacrifices, the festal songs of Levites and worshippers, and the blare of the silver trumpets. Now, each house-door was shut, each tent-curtain drawn; and, save for the strains of the Hallel, a sacred silence pervaded the scene, while the immemorial feast was kept. It was the grandest and most impressive of all the types of the ancient dispensation. Though unrecognised by few in that vast assemblage, the Great Antitype Himself was there; the true Paschal Lamb about to take away the sin of the world.

"The even was come:" the last evening He was to spend in peaceful communion with His disciples. In the mysterious appropriate twilight, when the full moon was rising over Jerusalem, He had crossed from the hamlet of Bethany, and gathered the chosen apostles in a small room on Mount Zion; possibly the same apartment that had been hallowed to Him on many previous similar occasions, when He accompanied His Mother and "the multitude that kept holiday" from Nazareth: a room moreover, that more likely was soon to have a new consecrated association, as the scene of the joyful benedictions of Easter Evening. The Jewish memorial was now to be merged in the Christian. Not that the national commemoration was to be altered for something diverse in kind and significance. The two rites were each sacramentally expressive of the same peerless gospel truth. The testimony of Jesus, the one prospective the other retrospective, was the spirit of both ordinances. The older is to be interwoven with higher, diviner mysteries. If change there was, the change has been likened to that in a tree

when the blossom drops off to make way for fruit. And though "the Lord's Supper" is never to be superseded by any other rite on earth, it may itself be regarded as a transition Ordinance, which will attain its full consummation and perfection in the sublime Heavenly Festival; where, with no traitor and no betrayal to interrupt its celebration, we shall, as glorified guests, "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

II. Let us look to THE COMPANY ASSEMBLED. The *Master* and His *disciples*:—the Shepherd, and the flock that are so soon to be scattered.

The Passover Supper was essentially a gladsome family gathering. Relations and friends living in distant and diverse parts of Palestine, were enabled once a year—in this the loveliest season, when the land was in its full wealth of floral beauty, and its skies undimmed with a cloud—to meet at the sacred festival and renew suspended intercourse. Jesus, who habitually and scrupulously accorded with all innocent traditionary usages and customs, was not likely to make any exception in the present case. We might naturally have expected Him, therefore, to regard it as a fitting opportunity of gathering (shall we say, not in the limited apartment of a house, but within some commodious Tent of Galilean pilgrims on the Mount) all that were nearest and dearest of His family and friends, "His cousins and brethren." Would not the Marys of the Lakeside be there; and the Bethany sisters, with their restored brother; besides many other intimate friends and recipients of His grace and mercy? Above all,

would not the dear earthly Mother, whose love and presence must have been vividly associated, as we have just remarked, with many such previous anniversaries, have had her special summons? No. Every one of these we have named are conspicuous by their absence. They receive no invitation. It is to be a sacredly private and confidential meal with *His own chosen disciples*. The specific words of the invitation are in every way remarkable. "With desire have I desired" (with great desire) "to eat this Passover *with you*, before I suffer." And when Peter and John, at their Lord's bidding, track the footsteps of the water-carrier to his house, they deliver this as their message—"The Master saith, My time is at hand; where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover *with My disciples?*"

Solemn convocation! Monarchs of the earth were that night sitting on thrones of state or dreaming of conquest. But what was all the glory encircling *them*, compared with the undying interests which centre in that little band?

Imagine the scene. The Divine Lord had just performed, in their presence, an act of unparalleled humility. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had committed all things into His hands, and that He came from God and went to God." "*Came from God!*"—At that moment, with the full consciousness of His underrived glory,—in His hand the garnered treasures of the universe. "*Went to God!*"—With all the prospect of His approaching triumph over death and the grave, and His ascension to His Mediatorial Throne,—yet *then*, He undid His loose upper garment, took a towel

and girded Himself, and washed the disciples' feet. Going from couch to couch on which they were reclining, carrying in His own hand the brazen laver, and stooping to this menial office "as one that serveth!" Having resumed his white festal robe, He invites them to partake of the provided Feast. But in doing so, He renews the significant intimation of what was before them and Him. It was a feast preliminary to His own "*suffering*." We need not have wondered if this theme of suffering, like a sombre keynote of plaintive minor, had run through all His discourse; if the shadow of the morrow's cross projected on His path had occupied and engrossed His mind to the exclusion of all else. But see His unselfishness! With the anticipated agony,—the surcharged clouds gathering more ominously and ever nearer around Him,—the gleam of the torches and the flash of the swords at hand, the buffeting and the ignominy;—sadder than all, the consciousness of the desertion of His own tried and trusted disciples,—still He seemed to have no thought for Himself or about the brimming of His own cup. His tenderest sympathies and longings and anxieties are for *them*. He has assembled them in this quiet guest-chamber, to breathe farewell words of comfort and peace: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Further, in order that they might retain these valedictory utterances in visible and permanent memorial, He proceeds to institute the sacred Ordinance—a keepsake and legacy of love, which would be treasured by them when He Himself would be visible no more. Yes, "having

loved His own which are in the world, He loved them unto the end!"

In all the other homes and within all the other tents of the City of solemnities that night (it was a very distinctive feature in the ceremonial observance), there was delivered, by the presiding head of the family, a narrative or rehearsal of the flight from Egypt and the subsequent wilderness journey to Canaan. In His opening valedictory discourse in the 14th chapter of St. John, Jesus, as it has been well said, "elevates and transfigures past historical events by transferring them to Himself and speaking of His own '*Exodus*.'"^{*}

We may even expand the thought, and note how, as if under a series of new gospel metaphors, He rehearses the wilderness wanderings of His people to the end of time; comforting in the first instance the Pilgrim Band around Him, as He points them to "the Way, the Truth, and the Life:" unfolding Himself before them as the wondrous Tree which will sweeten their bitterest Marah-pools: the true desert Rock, from whose smitten sides the waters of everlasting consolation flow in a perennial stream: the true Elim, with its stately palms of refreshment and wells of consolation: the true Joshua, conducting them at last in peace and triumph through the dry channel of Jordan, till landed in the Heavenly Canaan,—the Father's House with its many mansions, which He was going before to prepare for them!

Let us pass for a moment, in this rapid reference, from the Master to *the Guests*. It is interesting, in

^{*} Dr. Maclear, on the Holy Eucharist, p. 207.

the prospect of our own Communion, to note the variety of character surrounding that supper-table. Each member of the company has his own individuality, different mental and moral, as doubtless they had varying physical features: yet all, with one exception, are loving and beloved. In several—it may be diverse ways—they manifest their attachment and devotion. Outspoken, impulsive Peter, full of words, yet genuine, ardent, sincere. Silent, meditative John, wrapt in contemplation, in restful affectionate confidence leaning on his Lord's bosom. Calm, intellectual Thomas, and others of similar temperament; not saying much, or professing much: rather battling with doubt;—cast down because unable to show the same vehemence of love which some of their more enthusiastic fellow-apostles exhibited. In this respect they were types of the variety of guests that would in all future ages assemble round the same sacramental Table. They were representative communicants; representatives of that diversity of character which must ever distinguish God's true people, on similar solemn occasions. Some, of ecstatic frame and feeling, souls burning with ardour: others, fearful, distrustful, rejoicing with trembling; yet, though in a different way, equally conscious of love to their Lord: equally owned and recognised by Him, "who accepteth according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." Some, who I may venture to call, without for a moment implying or intending disparagement, demonstrative Christians, who can at once show what they are,—unfurl their banner and display it: others, like the Mother of our Lord, who "kept all these things in her heart." God will not

reject because the one is devoid of the complementary gifts and graces of the other. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit."

III. We have THE ANNOUNCEMENT MADE.

The Paschal meal and its attendant ceremonies were over. The cup of blessing and thanksgiving, we may suppose (according to olden wont), had four times gone round. The great Hallel—the closing psalm of praise, had been at least partly sung. The new rite is about to be instituted. But ere it is so, there is something of sorrowful import burdening the mind of the loving Master. He has, until now, kept it from the guests; He can do so no longer. He reluctantly adds new drops to their cup; but the sad story must be told. All in a moment, with startling abruptness, their hour of hallowed intercourse is broken by the communication, "*Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.*" How every word—syllable by syllable—must have gone like fiery arrows to their hearts! "*Verily I*"—I, your Lord and Master. *I*, the gracious One who called you from your homes in Gennesaret, and honoured you to be my confidential friends. I, who during three years of hallowed converse have given you proof of nothing but pure, disinterested love! "*Verily, I say.*" Too well do I know the sad truth. It is no peradventure, no surmise or contingency—something regarding which I may have been mistaken or misinformed. As the omniscient Lord, I can certify the painful reality. It is my own betrayal! I am to be ignominiously delivered up for crucifixion and death. By an act of secret treachery, my life has been com-

passed, and the assassins are already prowling on my path. Worst of all, it is "one of *you*" that is to be the guilty agent in consummating the foul deed. It is not an enemy, then I could have borne it: but he that dippeth with Me in the dish, eateth with Me at table, the man I have received—welcomed—honoured as a brother and friend, "hath lifted up his heel against Me." A nefarious bribe is to conquer and cancel the memories of much recent kindness. Need we wonder that another Evangelist should tell us, in a parallel passage, that "as Jesus testified these things, He was troubled in spirit."* It was not the nail and spear of Jew or Roman which now entered His soul. It was the thought of injured goodness and unrequited love on the part of a faithless disciple. It was Sinless Purity incarnate, wounded in the house of His friends. He wept over a whole city; now His mighty soul is bowed in sorrow by the base conduct of one Apostate, and the keen anguish seems too deep for tears! Oh! let that single unhappy traitor tell us, what one sin, trifled with—tampered with—can do. His name, "Judas," means "praise of God." We have every reason to believe that he was once as earnest and faithful as his brother Apostles;—as disinterested in his motives as they, in joining Christ and the Disciple-band:—God's candle shining on his head. But covetousness—the base and degrading love of money—assailed his better nature. In an evil hour he dangled its forbidden gold and silver chains, and they became fetters to bind him.

* John xiii. 21. "The emotion belongs to the highest region, τῷ πνεύματι, not τῇ ψυχῇ, as it is called out by the prospect of a spiritual catastrophe."—*Canon Westcott* on St. John.

The master-passion by degrees took full possession of his soul,—dominated his will and affections,—crushed every lofty aspiration—all that once was fair and lovely and of good report, and left him, at last, a blighted blackened ruin, demon-haunted and defiled! The most awful sin that ever stained the catalogue of creature guilt came to brand with infamy his name and memory. As we see him leaving abruptly the supper-table, and from the lighted room plunging into the dark streets with a deeper darkness in his soul; from no one figure in all sacred story comes there so terrible a lesson:—a lesson that may well be enforced by the inspired monitory words:—“Ye, therefore, beloved, beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” “Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.”

IV. We have one other point remaining: THE WAY IN WHICH THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS RECEIVED.

“They were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?” What, rather, might we have expected? Surely that the disciples, after a first moment struck dumb with shame and amazement, would have united in an instantaneous disavowal—spurned and repudiated the incredible imputation, saying: “Lord, it cannot be that villany so base can possibly be ours. We could not be such recreants and renegades towards One so kind and indulgent as Thou!” Or, if not this, that each would look with a suspicious eye on his neighbour, or cast an uneasy glance on Judas. But, they were too busy with their own untrustworthy spirits to have

time, or thought, or room to fasten accusation on others. Instead of the query passing from lip to lip, "Is it thou?" every eye was turned to their injured Master as they inquired, through anguished tears, "Lord, is it *I*?" As much as to say,—'Fearful beyond words is such an impeachment: yet we cannot, we dare not say it is impossible. We know too much of the wickedness and waywardness of these hearts of ours. We have proved weak and pusillanimous in the past,—broken reeds. We know too well, if left to ourselves, Satan may desire to have us, that he may sift us as wheat: "Lord, is it *I*?"' Was that apprehension—that unconscious self-distrust and misgiving—unwarranted? Never were these disciples, we believe, more touched with the love of their Lord, or more conscious of the sincerity and loyalty of their own, than now. *Yet*, they all, a few hours later, forsook Him and fled! *

* As these pages are being prepared for the press, the writer has had the privilege of seeing Mr. George Tinworth's Terra Cotta (in alto relievo) "THE LORD'S SUPPER:" another work of a true genius of the age, in plastic art. In some of its features it would be difficult to vindicate his departure from the conventional treatment; more especially in the attitude given to the principal Figure, who is represented *standing*, with the hand and brow of the Beloved disciple pressed on His right shoulder, instead of the familiar position we deem more in accordance with the sacred narrative,—that of reclining on the *Triclinia* (see Appendix). The artistic rendering of the entire subject is, nevertheless, unique, solemn, and impressive. The most striking novelty, if I may so call it, in that Jerusalem chamber with its tessellated walls, is the simultaneous movement of the assembled guests at the 'announcement': as if all, save three or four, had

Brethren, it is well for us, in our seasons of devoutest consecration, to cherish a sense of our own frailty ;—the fickleness and fitfulness of our best frames, the instability of our best purposes. Even on the holy ground we tread to-day, be it ours to avow, in profound

sprung involuntarily to their feet, stung with amazement, and shame, and horror, and leaning forward with eager question. The sorrow in the Great Divine Countenance—agony beyond words—we have never seen so profoundly rendered. All the faces in the composition, even those of the two slaves bearing the ‘amphora’—the water-flagon and basin, are directed to that of the Saviour, with one exception. Judas alone has his back on the Lord he had betrayed, consequently his face is turned to the spectator, and that too in the front row of the disciples. Nothing could be more wonderfully delineated than the averted countenance of the apostate : his eyes horror-struck, under rugged hair and scowling brows. Both hands are nervously clutching, the one the table-cloth, the other the purse with its ill-gotten gains—his very limbs sharing the compression and restraint of his whole frame. The couch on one side of the table is half turned over, on the other it is entirely so, with the divan-cushion lying underneath. One cup, in accordance with the treatment of the old religious painters, is upset by Judas on the table, another, by Peter, lies on the floor. The evidently leading object of the artist, to give the impression of sudden, vehement consternation, consequent on the announcement, has, as already noted, been singularly depicted. He gives us, scratched on the terra cotta, one of those quaint scriptural allusions, so common in his other religious works, and always so helpful and suggestive,—Judges v. 16, “There were great searchings of heart.” Even though we may prefer to retain the thought rather of a quiet scene of sorrow, amid the hush of silence, we can understand at least the possibility of these irrepressible, uncontrollable emotions ; and pay a just tribute to the Sculptor, who has translated this and all his kindred scriptural subjects, with consummate skill and unquestioned reverence.

humility and godly fear, 'Lord, it is Thy grace alone which keeps me from being another Judas. I cannot trust this traitor-heart. I shall go to Thy table, uttering and deeply feeling the confession, "By the grace of God I am what I am!"'

Yet, let me add, on the other hand; as God's appointed ordinance—if partaken of in a spirit of lowly, earnest faith, it cannot fail to prove a quickener in the divine life, stimulating to new and more devoted obedience. Though in many ways our hearts may condemn us, He who is "greater than our hearts" will accept our offerings, and give us strength equal to our day. The very approach to Him, through His special mean of grace, will secure its own pledged and covenanted blessing:—"Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember Thee in Thy ways" (Isaiah lxiv. 5). "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing: and I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel xxxiv. 26). Doubtless, on many a future dark and perplexing day, when their Master was gone, and they had to fight single-handed the battles of the faith, would the Apostles revert to this hallowed hour of a first Communion. May He, whose presence and blessing now, as then, gives to the solemn Ordinance all its preciousness, make Himself known to us in the breaking of bread: revealing the mystery of His suffering love, the completeness and glory of His final victory; and fulfil in our experience His assured promise—"In all places where I record My name, I will come unto thee and bless thee."

VIII.

SUNDAY EVENING.

THE GREAT FESTAL GATHERING AND SONG OF HEAVEN.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders : and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”—Rev. v. 11, 12.



WHAT an anthem is this !
 We have, to-day, been assembled at Christ's Sacramental Table, contemplating the memorials of His dying ever-living love. The sublime passage just read contains also an august description of a Communion. But the place of convocation is not a Temple on earth, but Heaven : the fellow-guests, not a few perishable mortals, but a glorified multitude which no man can number. It may form no unbecoming theme, surely, for this evening's service, to connect our sacrament below with the Supper of the Lamb above:—The eternal festal Sabbath ; no mock kiss of pretended friendship to mar,—no anticipated hour and power of darkness to

ruffle the deep rapture of its joy. How profoundly interesting the thought that we have here depicted what is *now* transacting in the Upper Sanctuary. How delightful to reflect, that in ourselves ascending the Mount of Ordinances, we have been identified with the redeemed around the Throne; that the Church militant and the Church triumphant are associated in the same grand commemorative rite. Lo! as faith catches up the echoes of the Heavenly minstrelsy, it tells that our theme and our song are one—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." In their connection with the previous and succeeding context, let me advert to a few consolatory truths with which the passage is replete. We may learn—

(1.) *The complacency with which Christ looks back on His own Atoning work and sufferings.* It was predicted, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied;" and it would appear from the text, as if this were to be a perpetual sight and ever new satisfaction. If, even on earth, when the appalling prospect was before Him of treading the winepress of the wrath of God; when, at hand, was the gleam of the midnight torch, the assassin-band, Gethsemane's hour and power of darkness, and other deepening shadows beyond:—if, even then, anticipating the results of Redemption, He could say, as if longing for the final triumph—"I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"—now, when His work is completed, the vision informs us with what holier satisfaction He regards the retro-

spect of His agony and endurance. Rejoicing still to talk with His redeemed, as He did of old on the Mount of Transfiguration, of "the decease accomplished at Jerusalem:" beholding on every side the evidences of His conquest,—living trophies in their robes of light and with palms of triumph: contemplating the influence His death has exercised, not on the family of earth only, but on the varied orders of intelligence throughout the universe; what an attestation to God's immaculate holiness, His unimpeachable rectitude, His burning purity, His boundless mercy! Shall the record be allowed to perish, or be henceforth an unknown and unpondered theme in Heaven? No: exceptional as it is, there shall still be one everlasting memorial there of anguish and suffering, in a place where pain never enters and suffering is unknown. Accordingly, when the Redeemer puts the coronation anthem into the lips of His worshippers, He reveals Himself, not in the glories of Godhead, but as a *slain Lamb*, wearing the marks of humiliation. He tells them to make Calvary still their meditation, and His Cross and Passion the great Sacrament of eternity. The print of the nails in His hands, and the spear-mark in His side, are not the mementoes of shame but of victory:—remembrancers of a love whose depths the ages cannot fathom. The vision of the text thus becomes the mightiest of preachers, replete to the hosts above with the Story of grace. There is a tongue in every wound of the glorified Sufferer, silently but expressively proclaiming, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!"

(2.) The Vision of the slain Lamb would seem sym-

bolically to point to *the perpetual efficacy of the Saviour's sacrifice*. "Christ was *once* offered to bear the sin of many." "By *one* offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." By that one oblation He has made the bestowment of love and mercy compatible with every demand of justice and every requirement of righteous law. Nearly nineteen centuries have rolled by, since these wounds were opened and that blood shed. But the power and sufficiency of the Atonement are undiminished:—still is He "able to save to the uttermost." And what is His plea when, as the ever-living Intercessor, He bears the names of His covenant people on His heart in every approach to the Throne? It is the plea of His own precious blood-shedding. He appears as "the slain Lamb." He points to the mute but expressive traces and symbols in His own adorable Body, as the grounds of His Advocacy. The live coals in the censer of the true Aaron (the fire of suffering) give the odour-breathing incense of His merits all its fragrancy. By His death He wrought out atonement; by intercession He perpetuates it and renders it for ever efficacious; so that in the noblest of senses it may be said of Him, "He being dead, yet speaketh." When on earth He poured out His soul in strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save Him from death, "He was heard in that He feared." In heaven He pleads in silence. He is heard in that *He suffered*.

(3.) The Vision informs us of *the continued identity of Christ's Person as God-man Mediator*. It assures His people that He is the same Saviour now that He was on earth. "Behold the Lamb of God!" said

John, when pointing out the Man of sorrows in this valley of tears. "Behold the Lamb of God!" exclaim myriads in the Heavenly Sanctuary, when gazing on the exalted Saviour. It is indeed a glorified humanity He now wears; but it is humanity still:—His risen Body a human Temple enshrining the Shekinah of Godhead. As the slain Lamb He proclaims that the same heart which throbbed in anguish on the Cross still beats on the Throne: that He is still the elder Brother, "the living Kinsman," the Almighty Friend; still feelingly alive, exquisitely sensitive to every pang that rends the human soul. What were the comforting words which the angels, on the Mount of Ascension, addressed to the disciples as they saw the bright cloud bearing their Lord to Heaven? "This *same* Jesus." Precious assurance! Jesus unchanged and unchangeable:—"this same Jesus" of Bethlehem and Nazareth, of Jerusalem and Galilee; "this same Jesus," who mingled His tears with the widow at the gate of Nain;—who wept over the memory of a cherished friendship, and was melted in a flood of tenderest compassion over a fated city and an apostate land; "this same Jesus," who breathed balm-words of comfort on the very eve of His own agony, and in the midst of it welcomed a dying felon to Paradise—is now, with a heart of unaltered love and sympathy, wielding the sceptre of universal empire. And He will continue "this same Jesus" until these clouds be once more parted, and the celestial gates once more opened, that He may "come again and receive us unto Himself." This is, and ever shall be, His name and memorial, "I *am*

He that liveth and *was* dead." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and *for ever*."

(4.) We may yet further infer from the Vision, that *Redemption is the grand theme of adoration for unredeemed angels, as well as for the redeemed family of God.* It is a mighty throng of worshippers the text discloses. It is not one company alone. We have angels, "living ones," and elders,—redeemed and unredeemed. No harp is unstrung, no voice silent. One strain thrills on every tongue,—“Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain!” It is only one of the many ranks who may be said to be personally interested in the subject-matter of the anthem; and yet the whole celestial hierarchy would seem to dwell with devout and delighted amazement on the marvel of marvels. We may picture them exclaiming in turns, as they gaze on the significant symbol of sufferings, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts!” How spotless His righteousness! How inexorable His justice! How unsearchable His wisdom! How infinite His love! How He hated sin, yet loved the sinner! How He magnified the law by showing He could by no means clear, and yet how He *has* ‘cleared, the guilty!’

Dear Friends, it is surely an elevating thought, that you have been this day associated in your Sacramental feast, not with the Church triumphant alone, ransomed sinners who have exchanged the pilgrim warfare for the pilgrim rest, but with the whole Family of God, from the archangel nearest the throne to the least in the kingdom. Though requiring not, as we do, the personal application of the blood of sprinkling, they

love to assemble as spectators at the Great commemorative rite, and make it the theme of devoutest contemplation; for, we read, "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." When they search for the richest displays of the Divine character, whither is it, we are told, they direct their gaze—with what do they task their immortal energies? With folded wings they bend over Gethsemane and Calvary, and exclaim, "The whole EARTH is full of His glory!"

(5.) The Vision of the text informs us, of *the pre-eminent dignity and bliss of the ransomed saints*. The Evangelist heard the voice of many Angels *round about* the throne, and round about the living ones, and round about the elders. What does this unfold, but a succession (so to speak) of concentric circles encompassing the all-glorious and glorified CENTRE; and that the innermost circle—those standing nearest the slain Lamb, permitted the nearest glimpse of His Presence—are "*Elders*," *i.e.* the Redeemed from the earth. It was the white-robed multitude, with crowns and palms, who in a subsequent vision were beheld "*before the Throne*:" God sitting on the Throne and dwelling among them. They would seem (to use the language of the old divines,) as if reckoned the blood-royal of Heaven,—"*Kings and priests unto God*," "*sitting with Christ on His throne*." Wondrous spectacle! the ranks of cherubim and seraphim, angel and archangel, making way, that redeemed sinners may take the station nearest "*the excellent Glory*," and pour in their own special chorus, in which no unredeemed tongue can join—"He was slain for *us*!"

(6.) We learn further from the Vision, *the unity which pervades the heavenly ranks*. "Angels," "Living ones," and "Elders." No discordant voice to disturb the symphony. Not only so, but among the elders themselves (the ransomed from earth) there is blessed harmony. We read of the whole aggregate Church triumphant, "the four-and-twenty," symbolising the varied churches of Christ gathered from "every kindred and tongue and people and nation," singing in sweet concert the new song, and falling down in blissful accord at the feet of Him that liveth for ever and ever. However different on earth, *there*, at least, variance ceases. No jarring sound:—no party or separating shibboleth. The trumpet of discord mute. All seeing eye to eye and heart to heart. Then (alas! for the first time) that which is often spoken of as so beautiful in theory in the Church militant, will be realised in the Church glorified, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The only ambition amidst the mighty convocation will be, what harp will yield the richest melody, what tongue the loftiest tribute of grateful and adoring homage to "the Lamb—the Lamb that was slain!"

Finally, let us draw one other concluding lesson. The vision seems intended *to prepare the Church on earth for her own sufferings, and reconcile her to her approaching tribulation*. The scene is placed near the beginning of the Apocalypse; a preliminary to the pouring out of a succession of vials on the nations. But, ere the thunders awake, the Church receives a wondrous vision of consolation. What

is that? It is the sight of an *Almighty Fellow-Sufferer*! What can better reconcile her to have her own vestments dipped in blood, than looking up to the crimsoned vesture of her Adorable Head? How can she repine, when she looks to heaven and beholds the once Crucified Saviour: reminding her that in her struggles she can fare no worse than her Master and Lord;—that if persecutions be appointed, what are they, when she sees on the Throne the visible memorials of suffering, in comparison with which all her experiences of scenes and ages of agony would be but as dust in the balance? We know nothing more consolatory for the child of God, in the midst of sorrows too deep for utterance and tears, than to take the vision of the text and dwell on its profound teachings. Afflicted believer! trial upon trial, like wave after wave, may have been rolling over thee:—deep calling unto deep. But is there not a voice from that Slain Lamb proclaiming—“I am a Fellow-Sufferer;” and mayest thou not well be dumb under the unanswerable challenge—“Was there ever sorrow like unto My sorrow?” Precious vision! it tells me, when my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity, that there is One at the right hand of God who can say, from identity of experience, “I know your sorrows;” for as the Slain Lamb, the Man of sorrows, He has felt them all Himself. Ah! it is a *Lamb* too, the token and emblem of innocence. Can I, a guilty sinner, repine at my afflictions, when this spotless, sinless, innocent Lamb of God was dumb before His shearers? Is there not a voice stealing from that glorious and glorified One, addressing every child

of tribulation, 'O bleeding heart, look at *My* wounds, and then say, canst thou murmur?'

Men and brethren, we have celebrated another high festival on earth; and as we descend the Mount, let us do so with the anthems of glory we have now been considering sounding in our ears. Lo! the immortal ranks (to repeat our opening sentence)—are busied with the same festive rite as ourselves. They echo back the motto and watchword as their own, which has ascended from not a few spirits among us to-day—"God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." O Lamb of God, who didst so freely shed Thy blood; we entreat that that blood may plead mightily *for* us!—that when we bid farewell to Communions here, and rise to the everlasting festal Sabbath in Heaven, it may be to prolong and perpetuate words which have been now uppermost in our hearts; which form our rejoicing whilst pilgrims on earth; which will compose our death-song and smooth our death-pillow; which will be our passport at Judgment and our triumphant anthem through Eternity—"WORTHY, WORTHY, WORTHY IS THE LAMB, THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN!"

IX.

SUNDAY MORNING.

THE OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO OBSERVE THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

"Therefore let us keep the feast."—1 Cor. v. 8.



THESE words (which are selected more as a motto than a text), I desire, with the utmost simplicity of thought and language, to take as the theme of appropriate meditation on this Sacramental Sunday morning. Our subject is—the solemn and imperative obligation resting on Christians to keep the sacred Feast of Communion.

There are not a few, regularly and devoutly worshipping God in His Sanctuary,—“not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is,” who yet leave their places vacant on the recurrence of the Holy Ordinance of the Supper. As the professing servants and followers of a great and good Master, I would desire to bring home to all here present who have arrived at a mature age, the privilege and duty of making this avowal of their faith in Christ and of consecration to His service. Let me proceed to state one or two reasons, why the Communion

Service ought to be devoutly observed, by every one who bears the Saviour's name.

I. The Lord's Supper is to be observed, *because its obligation rests on the Redeemer's dying command.* An injunction is always rendered more binding and imperative if it have these two, among other considerations, to enforce it—

(1.) *When it comes from the lips of One we love, and who has shown a deep interest in our welfare.* We naturally pay a respectful deference to the request of a neighbour or acquaintance; but what is this, in comparison with the command of a parent? How supremely obligatory to every right-thinking child is the wish emanating from a father or mother, and with what joyful alacrity is it obeyed! The son going to a distant land has a Bible put into his hands, as the last gift of doating love, with the sacred promise exacted and given, that night by night in the adopted home he will never fail to use it. The request might be sacred for other reasons; but doubly so would it be, when he regards it as that of his dearest earthly friend. When, in the desert sea, or in the waste colonial solitude, memory travels back to the parental hearth, and remembers the devotion which so often and so willingly submitted to self-sacrifice: the hands which smoothed the pillow of sickness, and the voice which solaced in the hour of sorrow: if he ever proved traitor to his trust;—if that hallowed souvenir should be ever left to gather dust on the neglected leaves, we know whose image would be the first to give the upbraiding look of injured love, and lead him with remorseful tears to unclasp it once more.

The observance of the Lord's Supper is the solemn injunction of *One*, who has proved Himself to be infinitely more than the best and fondest on earth. Even a mother's love—noblest type and ideal of supreme human affection—pales before His. All our tenderest and most endearing relationships, individually and combined, form but a feeble image and emblem of the devotion of this Parent of parents—this Brother of brothers—this Friend of friends! “He that doeth the will of my Father in Heaven, *the same is my mother and sister and brother.*” It is from the lips of such peerless LOVE the command is addressed, to “keep the Feast!”

(2.) Another consideration which makes such a request specially obligatory, is, *if it be conveyed at some exceptionally solemn or momentous season.* Surely if there be a time in the history of any human being more sacred or impressive than another, it is at the hour of death. How sacred must have been the dying adjuration of the last of the Patriarchs, when he “made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones!” How filially and loyally was this injunction obeyed: all the more so, just because it was a dying one. The bones of Joseph were not allowed to repose in Egyptian sarcophagus or under Egyptian pyramid. They were religiously guarded and kept unburied by his children's children, until, borne in the longest funeral procession the world ever saw, they were laid, in obedience to his last injunction, in the mausoleum at Sychar.

Take a New Testament illustration. Timothy would feel at all times imperative the wishes of his great

spiritual father. But when the latter was "such an one as Paul the aged," "ready to be offered," sinking under the weight of years and suffering in his dungeon home, how devoutly would the younger disciple respond to his injunction, even to the request about his winter cloak and parchment writings left in Troas! And, when the noble champion of the faith was gathered to the Church triumphant, how specially would every dying word listened to in that Mamertine prison, remain graven indelibly on the survivor's heart. What shall we say of the circumstances in which the parting command—the great farewell injunction—was given, of a Greater than the greatest of Apostles, that of the Divine Saviour of the world? "Do this in remembrance of Me" has, as we well know, the special significance and impressiveness attached to it, of being uttered the night before death. It was, as much as the "Peace I leave with you," His dying legacy. He left on it the impress of His dying lips; ay, too, when His agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and Passion, and all their fearful accompaniments, were vividly pourtrayed to His omniscient eye. If St. John felt that the hallowed bequest of his Lord had a double obligation, because uttered by the faint lips of the Crucified in the supreme moment of suffering love—"Son, behold thy mother—Mother, behold thy son;"—if, just because it was spoken with dimming eye and paling countenance, that disciple regarded the direction and trust all the more sacred, from that hour to take the bereft mourner to his own home;—with what profound reverence ought not we to accept and ratify the valedictory command of Jesus, to shew forth

His death in His own appointed Ordinance? Yes! If I love the Saviour; and so loving Him, if there be pre-eminently sacred music in His dying words; then surely no evasion of what is alike a duty and a privilege can be pleaded regarding our solemn Feast day. "If ye love Me," says He, "keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Blessed Redeemer! to Whom we look for every hope for time and for eternity;—in the great crisis-hour of Thy work and sacrifice, Thou didst not only institute this precious Memorial, but didst lay upon Thy Church the solemn injunction to perpetuate it for all ages: "Therefore, let us keep the Feast."

II. I would observe, under our second general head, That an obligation rests upon us to celebrate the New Testament Ordinance, *because it is a befitting public declaration of our Christian profession.*

Beautiful must have been the spectacle of that ancient mountain gathering, when the tribes of Israel assembled to give public testimony of their allegiance to their fathers' God, on the slopes of Ebal and Gerizim. More solemn and interesting still, what we have on other occasions referred to in connection with our Sacramental seasons—when, year by year, the valleys and highways of Palestine were vocal with the songs of Pilgrims, as they went in company to celebrate the appointed feasts. Jehovah required them thus, year by year, to make mention of His name in the City of Solemnities. It was not enough for Jewish parents, by oral instruction, to impart His will and unfold His testimonies to their children,—talking to them when

“sitting in the house and when walking in the way, —when lying down or rising up;”—thus faithfully inculcating in the homestead the observance of private and domestic religion. “The Lord loveth the Gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” Jerusalem was the place where He recorded His Name, and where He promised especially to meet His chosen people. Hence every true and leal-hearted Israelite, when he came of age, considered it alike a duty and delight to take part in the holy convocation, and “subscribe himself by the name of Jacob.” “Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.”

Brethren, “let us keep the Feast”—our New Testament Passover—as a blessed opportunity of testifying, in presence of our fellow-Christians and before the world, our obligations to the Saviour, and that we are not ashamed of Him and His gospel. Observe, the Psalmist (himself a devout worshipper) puts special emphasis in paying his vows “*in the presence of all God's people.*” “In the courts of the Lord's House, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem” (Ps. cxvi. 14, 19). Let none of us be guilty of false shame, shrinking from an open declaration of the infinite debt of gratitude we owe to Redeeming Love. Even the soldiers of pagan Rome were not ashamed to pay their religious vows along with their comrades. They gloried in ascending the steps of the Capitol to the Temple of Victory, with their votive offerings, swearing by the gods of Olympus allegiance to their Imperial Master. And shall we, Christians, be found cowards to the

true Jehovah and His Christ, when the heathen did public fealty to dumb idols? If such unworthy feeling be deterring any from approaching that Holy Table, let them remember the righteous upbraiding which will meet them at the Great Day, "Whosoever is ashamed of Me and my words, of Him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels." Nay, nay; may this rather be the avowal that rises spontaneously to our lips, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the Name of our God we will set up our banners." God helping us, we shall not, like the recreant children of Ephraim, "carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle." The servant may desert his master: the beggar may refuse to recognise his benefactor: the restored may pass unacknowledged the physician that cured him: the soldier may absent himself from the ranks, or basely disown his brave and trusted leader: but God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou hast given a banner unto them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of Thy truth." "Therefore, let us keep the Feast!"

III. We are under an obligation to keep this feast, because *by not keeping it, we incur spiritual loss*. We never can be careful enough in discarding the false and unscriptural idea, that there is any peculiar grace or virtue in the Sacrament,—any mystic charm to pacify conscience:—or that the mere act of communicating earns some claim or title to God's favour;—in some mysterious way condones transgression, and can-

cels bygone guilt. We can entertain no such modification of the Roman Catholic dogma. As little could the mere act of communicating have power to take away sin, under the new dispensation, as had the blood of bulls and of goats under the old. All grace and mercy, pardon and acceptance, flow, not from the sacrament, but from Christ. This Ordinance is no more than one of "the golden pipes" spoken of by Zechariah in his beautiful and instructive vision, as conveying the golden oil from the Heavenly reservoir (Zech. iv. 12). But neither, on the other hand, must we undervalue the Ordinance, *as a mean* of grace. It is doubtless one of the Divine channels for the conveyance of spiritual good:—one of the aforesaid golden pipes which transmit needed and promised grace to the soul. God could have fed His Temple-lamps miraculously, without aid or intervention. He could have nourished them by some occult supernatural process. But in this, as in other things, He works by instrumentalities; and if we neglect those of His own express appointment, we cannot expect otherwise than to suffer spiritually. Would the Pilgrim host of Israel have sustained no deprivation if they had omitted to quench their thirst and fill their leathern bottles at the wells of Elim? Would Elijah have suffered no loss if he had rejected the proffered food, in whose strength he braved the sterile desert for forty days and nights? And how can we expect otherwise than to incur loss and detriment if we pass by this Well of Living Water dug for us in the Valley, without partaking of its refreshment?

We would confidently appeal to many who, in obedi-

ence to their Lord's command, have come again and again (using the expressive word of an old writer), to this gracious "*Trysting-place*" and surrounded His Table. Have you not found it a precious means of advancing the work of grace, and of fostering spiritual growth in your hearts? Can you not, as you look back to these "Delectable mountains," with their hallowed memories, exclaim, "It was good for me to be there"—"I will remember Thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar"? How many have there received some unexpected tokens of blessing: gracious revelations of the Saviour's character and work: new unfoldings of the Saviour's love: some more intense and quickened longings after divine fellowship: some more realising and energising views of the unseen and eternal? Ask such, if they regard this Day of Solemnity as an empty form,—a mere periodical accordance with a conventional religious custom, from which they expect no fresh and stimulating impulse to faith, and love, and holiness? They will tell you far otherwise. "I have meat to eat which the world knows not of." "His Flesh is meat indeed, and His Blood is drink indeed." "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." We take no undue or exaggerated estimate of His ordinance when we say, that it is the choicest and most strengthening repast provided by the Master for His spiritual Israel, in the House of their pilgrimage.—"Lord, evermore give us this Bread!"

These remarks may appropriately be closed by a

simple reference, and no more, to a difficulty. This difficulty is occasionally felt and expressed as two-fold, on the part of those who remain away from the Lord's Table, and forfeit a personal share in the blessing of which we have spoken.

(1.) 'We are not warranted to approach the Table of Communion, *because we are not prepared for it.*' My answer is:—The same reason which makes you unfit for the Communion, is equally valid, equally pertinent, in rendering you unmeet and unready for *Death*. Unfit for the Communion Table in the Church below, can you be fit to sit down at the Supper-table of the Church above? Unworthy! Oh, is it not *because* we are sinners, and *unworthy*, that we are invited to come to the Feast, and there to celebrate the infinite worthiness of "the Lamb that was slain?"

(2.) It is further and not unfrequently urged: 'We cannot go to the Sacrament of Communion *because we know that some venture who have no right to be there.*' 'Hypocrites,' say they, 'frequent this hallowed ground: those living in known sin and spending disreputable lives. We shall not, we cannot go, where the cup of fellowship is mixed with the cup of devils: to talk of it as a "Communion" would be a brand and stigma on the name.' I reply:—Your duty of obedience to your Lord's command is independent of any such intruders. You are not responsible for the sin and presumption of others. If hypocrites there be, to the Lord they thus mock, and defy, and crucify afresh,—not to you,—are they answerable. It is a disputed question, whether the betrayer himself dared to partake of the consecrated elements on the night of Institution. If he did, John

and Peter and James were assuredly not responsible for the sacrilege,—the defiant crime of the Apostate putting his lips to that sacred cup. And of every Judas who ventures with unhallowed footstep among disciples still, we can only say—"To his own Master he standeth or falleth."

Jesus bids all His lowly followers welcome. "Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Why stand excluded from the gracious privilege by the intervention of any needless barriers and impediments unrecognised by the Master? If in any degree conscious of love to Him who *first* loved, and *so* loved you, and cherishing a humble yet earnest desire for its increase: do not delay this public manifesto of your allegiance. Rather, in response to His invitation, "Come, for all things are ready,"—be it yours to say, even while deeply feeling your unworthiness and infirmity—

‘Just as I am ! Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down ;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone—
O Lamb of God ! I come !’

We cannot more appropriately close, than by simply repeating our text, and the words of the immediate context—" *Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.* THEREFORE, LET US KEEP THE FEAST."

X.

SUNDAY EVENING.

BEAUTIFUL WITH SANDALS.

“How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter !”
—Sol. Song vii. 1.



AM well aware of the purely secular treatment the Song of Solomon has received at the hands of not a few scholars in these modern days.

I shall not, however, be deterred by any schools or tenets of theology, from utilising a precious Book of the sacred Canon for the highest spiritual instruction. This, too, on no “accommodation theory,”—deflecting it from a poor earthly meaning, in order to engraft pious thoughts and lessons it was never designed to furnish or suggest. Grant that it has an historical basis; grant that its primary and original purpose was to serve as an *Epithalamium* (a Marriage Song), or that its literary structure assumes the form of an Idyl or Eclogue:—still, these are but the setting of a more precious Jewel. It has a truer intrinsic value than that of being merely a choice product and specimen of Hebrew pastoral poetry. Its chapters have been,

to tens of thousands of God's holiest and best, from Origen, and Jerome, and Theodoret among the Fathers, down to our own Samuel Rutherford, like "Apples of Gold in pictures of Silver:" It has been called by one of them "The Holy of Holies of the Bible sanctuary." * At no time do the themes of the Great Allegory seem more befitting and appropriate, than when forming part of the service of a Communion Sabbath.

In a remarkable passage immediately preceding our text, Christ is figuratively regarded as coming down to "the Garden of nuts" (the Church on earth) to hold communion with His members: they transporting their chariots of faith and love up to the Gates of Heaven to quicken His approach: "or ever I knew

* It is the enthusiastic saying and verdict of Rabbi Akiba (A.D. 120), that earth's brightest and best day was that on which it was added to the Hebrew Canon. "No day in the whole history of the world is of so much worth as the one in which the Song of Songs was given to Israel: for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is most holy."—Quoted by Professor Charteris in his Croall Lectures, p. 79.

"Under any other opinion as to its real nature," says so safe and reliable an authority as the late Dr. Kitto, "we should find it difficult to account for the presence of a Book of this description in the Sacred Scriptures: and such an opinion is also in the fullest conformity with other passages in Sacred Scripture, in which the Lord permits the relation between Himself and His Church to be described by the most endearing of all relations—that between the husband and the wife, or the bridegroom and the bride. . . . Other corroborations of the mystical meaning of the book" (and he gives examples) "may be derived from the existing poetry in the East."—*Preface to Commentary on "Song of Songs."*

it,—my soul bare me (*marg.*) on the chariots of a willing people" (vi. 12).

The Great Redeemer, the Heavenly Bridegroom, is now represented under the leading emblem of the Book, as surveying the beauties and excellences of His betrothed bride. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee." Amazed at His condescension she replies: "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" "What, O my Saviour, wilt Thou see in me?" by nature lost, by daily transgression incurring Thy displeasure; my love so weak, my resolutions so feeble: "What will ye see?" Nothing but a divided heart; "the company of two armies." Grace on the one hand, corruption on the other; faith on the one hand, sight and sense on the other; the remains of the carnal mind still enmity against God, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And didst Thou not "cover my head in the day of battle;"—fight for me the good fight of faith; restrain my foes and curb my wavering affections; I should long ago have been able only to tell of *one* army; that I was leagued on the side of Satan against Thee; the helpless victim of my own legion-sins, my present tyrants, my future tormentors. Even now, with all Thy wondrous mercy and gracious forbearance, I feel too often and too mournfully the tendency of the evil heart of unbelief. Self-abased, and self-condemned, alas! I need no other lips than my own to attest the humbling reality:—Thou seest nothing but "as it were *the company of two armies*" (ii. 13).

Her Lord replies in the verse of the text. The

whole chapter is an apostrophe to her. She is in herself full of conscious unworthiness,—blemishes and shortcomings which seem to mar her best services and highest consecration. But He sees her clothed in the bridal attire of His own righteousness, having “neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing;” and instead of upbraiding her for avowed imperfections, He begins with the words:—“*How beautiful are thy sandalled feet, O Prince’s daughter!*” *

Let me this evening speak, with God’s blessing, on these two points.

I. The Church’s or the Believer’s NAME—“*Daughter*” and “*Prince’s daughter.*” And

II. Her Lord’s SUBJECT OF COMMENDATION—“*How beautiful are thy feet with shoes.*”

(1.) She is called “DAUGHTER.” This points to the

* The Hebrew term, *na’-al*, describes a sole made of leather, cloth, or wood, fastened to the ankle or instep with thongs, similar to what those, familiar with the south of Italy, may see still among the peasantry of the Abruzzi. These thongs or latches were often, in the case of wealthy and high-born Jewish females, richly embroidered. The sole, or thongs, or both, appear to have been made of the skin of some rare animal (“*tachash*”) Ezek. xvi. 10. The making of these sandal-straps is mentioned in the Mishna as a distinctive trade among the Jews. Female figures in *Christian* art are generally represented shod with complete shoes: as in the frescoes instanced in Bottari. See *Smith’s Dic. of Bible*; also of *Christian Ant.*, and *Kitto’s Cyclopaedia*.

An archæological friend sends me, among other ancient examples, a drawing, as seen in a tablet, of the shoe worn by the Queen of Ashur Bani Pal, King of Nineveh. The forepart of the shoe is covered with ornamental work, while something like spangles depend over the ankles.

tender relation subsisting between Christ and His people. When Jehovah in the Old Testament speaks most endearingly of His ancient Church, He calls it "The *Daughter* of Zion." He employs, indeed, manifold figures, all indicative of strong and ardent attachment. "As one whom his *mother* comforteth." "Can a *woman* forget her sucking child?" "Like as a *father* pitieth his children." "I will be a *Father* unto you." How graciously, too, does He adapt Himself to their special circumstances and diverse experiences! He came down to Abraham (the pilgrim and sojourner) in a tent. He came to Moses (when Israel was in the furnace of sore trial) in a burning bush—burning, yet not consumed. Joshua was fighting—a man of war; his Lord came to him with a sword drawn in His hand. Zechariah was in a deep midnight of national trouble;—the horrors of intestine feud and bloodshed impending; his Almighty Defender appeared to him by night, as "a man riding on a red horse," with the ensigns of battle and pledges of deliverance. In the text the believer needed gentle dealing. The Shulamite, represented in the lowly garden or valley of nuts,—the valley of humiliation, is compared to a budding pomegranate (vi. 11); graces feeble; requiring the genial influences of sunshine, or the balmy zephyrs of the south wind previously invoked (chapter iv. 16). It was necessary to express the *tenderness* of God's pardoning mercy and purposes. He will not treat as a son,—requiring bolder, harsher correction, the severer tokens of parental discipline. But He will manifest and bestow all forbearance and love. He calls that honoured believer "*Daughter!*"

(2.) But again, she is a "PRINCE'S daughter." He reminds her of her *pedigree*. It is no ordinary birth. She is one of the adopted children of the "King of kings;"—those who, by virtue of their spiritual relationship to the Prince of the kings of the earth, their Elder Brother, are themselves "made Kings and Priests unto God." Their glory is His glory. Their lives are, through this mystical indissoluble union, "hid with Christ." He feels what is done to them as sensitively as if it were done to Himself. Oh wondrous thought! God not only recognises them as His children, but includes them in the same paternal affection which He bears to His own dear Son. And Christ, the Brother in their nature, regards them with a like measure and intensity of love: "*As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.*" The concluding words of His memorable Valedictory prayer are among the most marvellous in the Bible—"That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them!" Well may we echo the challenge—"Who is a God like unto our God, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage?" "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among *princes*, and to make them inherit the throne of glory!"

Would that we could realise the full grandeur of these royal privileges which have been ratified to us to-day at the Sacramental Table. I repeat, let us not regard the language of the verse we are now considering as a mere trope of oriental poetry, but rather as a glorious divine reality: and those into whose

hearts God has sent forth His Spirit, enabling them to cry "Abba, Father," know it to be so. Heavenly blessings in Christ in possession: and, in reversion, the prospect of being ushered into the presence-chamber of the King; according to the description in Psalm xlv.:—the King's daughter "all glorious within," her clothing of "wrought gold" (the golden texture of a spotless righteousness not her own), arrayed in "raiment of needlework" (the graces of a divine life and character inwrought and inweaved by the Holy Ghost in the soul); "the virgins her companions following after;" rank on rank of attendant angels—ministering ones to the heirs of salvation—ushering her with gladness and rejoicing into the Heavenly Palace; there, as princes, and prince's daughters, to reign for ever and ever! How all earthly greatness dwindles into nothingness before the honours and immunities of God's purchased people! What is the mightiest king or prince of the earth?—a robe of ermine or a crown of gold conceals, underneath, a body corruptible as others. A breath may overturn the most towering fabric of earthly happiness. The vile worm refuted Herod's divinity. In an unexpected moment the revelries of Belshazzar were stilled in death, and his diadem plucked from his brow. One mandate from the throne of Heaven converted Sennacherib's tented field into a sepulchre, and scattered the pride of Assyria like chaff before the whirlwind. What is the history of earthly empires and kingdoms? "Ichabod! Ichabod!" an alternation of rise and fall: a proud capital one day, the next century a pile of ruins. The laurels of victory and empire one day fresh; another,

withering and fading with the brow that wears them. But, believers, yours are imperishable crowns:—palms ever green, robes ever white. The leaves of your coronation diadem are leaves plucked from the Tree of Life; yours an inheritance “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!” “Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”

Let us proceed now—

II. To the SUBJECT OF COMMENDATION:—“*How beautiful are thy feet with shoes.*”

I would observe (1.) The shoe, or sandal, in ancient times, and in oriental countries, was *the badge of freedom and honour*. The crouching slave never wore a sandal. The want of shoes—the unsandalled feet—was the badge and mark of subjection, if not of degradation. When the Lord, therefore, in the text speaks of His betrothed Bride’s feet being “beautiful with shoes,” what is this but to proclaim that she—type of every believer—is translated from the bondage of corruption into “the glorious liberty of the children of God?” Free from the condemnation of a broken law; free from the accusation of a guilty conscience; free from the terrors alike of temporal and of eternal death. “Thus shall ye eat it,” was the address to pilgrim Israelites of old,—assembled, as you have been to-day, at their Paschal feast,—“with your loins girded, *with the shoes on your feet*” (Ex. xii. 11). It was the anniversary of their emancipation,—the celebration of their national birthday, which brought them forth from

their land of bondage and terminated their thralldom. You come forth from a Communion Table, wearing the sandals of *freedom*. God has anew, in that blessed sacrament, sealed to you your divine liberty. Its significant symbols of love and suffering recall that you "are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Computing in some feeble measure the amazing ransom-price paid for your redemption, you can say with the Roman officer, as he addressed Paul in the castle of Jerusalem: "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed! In that beautiful festal Psalm where the worshipper is heard declaring, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord;" he is represented as adding,—“O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid, *Thou hast loosed my bonds*” (Ps. cxvi. 16).

I remark (2.) Shoes or sandals were *emblems of joy*: while the want of these was equally recognised and regarded as a symbol of grief and sorrow.

David, you will remember, when compelled to leave his throne and capital, and take flight to a land of exile, went up Mount Olivet *barefoot*. On the other hand, upon the occurrence of glad seasons,—whether great national ovations, or social feasts and entertainments, where mourning was turned into dancing,—the guests were supplied with sandals. Such, in the Parable of parables, was the case with the hunger-stricken prodigal, on his return from the far country to his forfeited filial privileges within paternal halls and

walls; the rejoicing father proclaiming it to be an occasion for making merry and being glad.

And is not the Christian called to be joyful? Yes, God's children are indeed, really, and in truth, alone of all, in this sin-stricken world, entitled to the epithet of "happy." Never say that gloom and despondency are the conditions and concomitants of the believer's creed and the believer's life;—that sadness of countenance is the badge and penalty of godliness. Who can forget that the God of nature is the God of Christianity? Never tell me, that He who gave the lily its beauty and the sky its delicate blue, and the sun golden wheels to his chariot and golden arrows of light for his quiver, could ever intend the soul to be draped in sackcloth. So long as we continue to be strangers to the covenant of promise, living in neglect of the great salvation,—then our figurative description is that of men *barefoot*; our appropriate emblems those of melancholy and sorrow; for happiness, in its highest and noblest phase, must be unknown in the bosom where God is a stranger. But the moment a man is united by faith to the Lord Jesus as his ever-living Redeemer;—the moment he obtains the assurance of sin forgiven,—the blessed sense of adoption into the Divine family,—he is "*girded with gladness*;" the shoes, not only of liberty but of holy joy, are put on his feet. Like the Ethiopian of old, in the desert of Gaza, having found what he had so long sought in vain, he goes on his way rejoicing. "The daughters of Jerusalem," the band or chorus of singers in this allegory, may appropriately name the Bride of the text "*SHULAMITE*," *i.e.* "peaceful." She is filled with "the peace of God which passeth all

understanding." The sacramental rite of to-day, when partaken of by those who can, with humble confidence, justify their claim to the title, "children of the King,"—may well be called "Eucharist," or "Feast of *Joy*." *

(3.) Once more. The sandals on the feet speak of *activity and duty*, and preparedness for Christ's service.† They point to the nature of the journey the believer is pursuing. Though a pleasant road, and a safe road, and a road with a glorious termination, it is at times rough; a path of temptation and trial. Unshod feet would be cut and lacerated with the stones and thorns and briars which beset it.

The figure, moreover, suggests, that there can be no loitering or lingering on the way. Impressive must have been the scene that night, to which we have already referred, at the first Paschal Feast in Egypt. It was not the solemn calm which so distinguishes our Communion celebration;—the elements handed slowly and reverently from guest to guest in a hush of hallowed silence. As we see the old Hebrew family, or cluster of families, gathered together, every movement betokens *celerity*. They stand girded—"harnessed." They eat the appointed Supper, not only with shoes on the feet, but, it was an added injunction—"in haste;" as it were, by snatches, like men who have not a moment to put off:—delay may be fatal. When we hear the voice of our "Beloved"

* It was so called by Ignatius, Justin, Origen, and Cyprian.

† When Jesus sent forth His disciples on their first mission tour, it is said, "He charged them to go . . . shod with sandals" (Mark vi. 8, 9).

saying, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!" we are reminded that these shoes are given not for ornament, but to be worn: they are given that His true Israel may walk, yea, "run in the way of the divine commandments:" ready to follow the Great Captain of salvation whithersoever He sees meet to guide them; seeking, with the true pilgrim ardour, to be ever advancing in the heavenward, homeward way; listening to the old monition, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." The path of the just is compared to the sun in the firmament, travelling in the greatness of his strength; glowing with intenser brightness until he reaches his meridian:—or, like the eagle in his soaring;—his nest on the earthly rock, but his home the skies. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

We may all take to ourselves here the apostolic injunction—"See that ye walk circumspectly." In the quaint but expressive phrase of an old divine on this passage, "Many are content to walk slipshod." They go with a halting pace; with meagre faith, and satisfied with a low standard of grace and holiness. They have shoes on their feet, but they are the sandals of a flimsy profession that cannot stand the rough parts of the road; and when affliction or tribulation arises, immediately they are offended. Beware, and specially those who have recently renewed their vows at the Holy Table:—beware of the first symptoms of spiritual declension;—that drowsy, sleepy, lukewarm condition so forcibly described in a preceding chapter of this same Song:—where the believer, stretched on the downy pillow of self-security, listens—but it is only with

languid indifference,—to the knockings of the Saviour at the door of the heart:—How tenderly, how gently, how urgently He importunes,—“Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night!” (v. 2). What is the cold reply of the slumberer? Mark how she invents excuses. She has cast off the sandals of a close and holy and habitual walk with God, and replies—“I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” Ah, if the feet had been *shod* as they ought to have been; if she had been on the alert, ready for duty and obedience, her Pilgrim-Lord would not have been repelled from the door, or left unwelcomed amid the falling, drenching dews. If she had been careful then to have been ready for His presence, she would not have been driven, as we find she was, out amidst the dark streets and rude watchmen of Jerusalem, seeking Him with plaintive wail, and bleeding feet, and anguished tears.

This subject suggests to us a lesson of a different kind. Another befitting fragment may be gathered from it at the close of our Sacred Feast. The shoes (the beautiful shoes) seem to indicate, not only the believer's personal activities in the matter of his own high calling, they point to him also as a messenger to *others*. The Church in each of her members must be, or ought to be, shod as “a ministering one.” It is noticed by an excellent commentator, that the translation of our text in the oldest Bible is, “How pleasant are thy *treadings* with shoes, O Prince's

daughter!" Hers should be treadings in the world's thousand pathways and byways of duty and kindness and mercy. It is a law in all God's moral government that "the elder should serve the younger,"—the higher minister to the lowlier natures. He who is at the summit of all Being ministers to the wants of angel and archangel. Christ, the Incarnate God, came "not to be ministered to, but to minister." The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." And, as God ministers to angels, and angels to man; so, surely, man, in a higher social station, ought, in accordance with this great law, to minister to those of his fellow-beings occupying a lowlier one. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." The family, surrounded and dowered with many domestic blessings, should be the willing almoners of God's bounty to others,—aiding and succouring the orphan and fatherless, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. Blessed is that church which sends its messengers "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" and whose advent is thus hailed by the perishing in the world's darksome valleys—"How *beautiful* upon the mountains are the *feet* of him that bringeth good tidings!" In Isaiah's temple-vision of the six-winged seraphim, while the 'pose' of a double twain of these wings was indicative of reverence—the contemplative and devotional element in the Christian character and life;—with the remaining twain "he did *fly*:" the symbol of joyful activity, ever ready to speed on behests of unselfish love and mercy. Nor is this the duty and the privilege only of the influential few. All in their varied

ways—(with many it may be a very humble and lowly way) may become such ministering angels of kindness. You may receive, for that little, but a small meed of praise from man. But the Great Recompenser, who does not forget even the cup of cold water, may be heard addressing you:—"How beautiful are thy feet,"—how pleasant are thy treadings "with shoes, O Prince's daughter!" *

Let all who have put on afresh their festal sandals to-day, seek in this, as in other ways, to follow Christ: to "walk, even as He walked." May it be said of you, "These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." He may at times take us by a rough road, narrow and difficult; full of crosses and hardships and losses; but He will not conduct us over a path harder than our shoes can bear. He will lead us by *the* right way to a city of habitation. When we think of the lessons more especially taught us at His Memorial Ordinance; how His feet were transpierced, that the sandals of salvation might be put upon ours; when we think that there is not the path of sorrow which the treadings of the Man of Sorrow knew not;

* Among the many fertile expedients in this age of Christian activities, there is one peculiar to those, who, from health or other hindering domestic circumstances, are denied more personal ministries of kindness:—viz., through the use of the pen. We believe no instrumentality has, in recent times, been more largely owned and blest, than the writing of letters, specially to the young: manifesting an interest in their welfare, temporal and spiritual, on entering the great battle of life, and when they stand so much in need of counsel, sympathy, and encouragement. The claim is all the more urgent in the case of those in lowlier circumstances.

nor the pang of woe which His bleeding heart felt not; shall we refuse to follow Him in any way He may choose to appoint? The ruggedness of this and every other tortuous and thorny road will be all forgotten, when our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!

Dare I close without one other urgent thought, which seems yet to claim a concluding sentence? Should there be any here, to whom the symbols of the Holy Table have been all unmeaning, who are still strangers to Christ and His Salvation: walking unshod;—slaves, for they have no real freedom; joyless, for they have no true joy: leading a selfish, aimless, profitless existence; living in unconcern and sin—their own souls in unrest, and others around them uncared for and unblest:—Let any such arise, and go to their Father. He welcomes every prodigal's return. There are shoes—jewelled sandals—awaiting in the long-lost home. Oh! how many has that Lord of love and tenderness watched in the hazy distance! How many a drooping penitent, with ragged dress and tear-dimmed eye, has He met at the threshold; and stripping off the tattered raiment, given orders to the attendant servants—“Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and SHOES ON HIS FEET.”

XI.

SUNDAY MORNING.

THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT AND ITS TYPICAL
SIGNIFICANCE.

"It is the Lord's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial : and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations ; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."—Exod. xii. 11-14.



HE Passover, in its earliest celebration, is perhaps the best known of all Old Testament types. But it is with it, as with most familiar things ; if they are interesting and impressive, they can well bear restatement and repetition. With the observance before us to-day of our own Gospel Feast, we may appropriately and with profit take the Jewish rite as our theme of meditation.

We are transported in thought to that memorable night when, under the guidance of their trusted leader, or rather under the strong Hand and outstretched Arm

of the God of the Pillar-cloud, the oppressed race are to leave their home of exile for ever. Let us endeavour, by individualising a domestic group, to form a mental picture of the scene.

On the 14th day of the month Nisan, an Israelite family are gathered for the last time in their Egyptian dwelling. The door is shut; the father's face is lighted up with joy as he addresses his assembled household with words of encouragement; for he knows that they are about, in some mysterious way, but with very real certainty, to bid farewell to their bondage. 'Fear not,' we may imagine him saying, 'ere the morrow dawns, Jehovah is to do mighty wonders! yet another hour, midnight will be here, and then a great cry will be heard amid the darkness; for the Destroying Angel is to speed through every dwelling in the land, and leave its firstborn dead:—son of king and son of slave. Ay, even the firstborn of beasts too. Egypt's animal-gods, which our oppressors in their base superstition have worshipped, will share the doom, and the Lord God of Israel, our God, shall be glorified.' If the father observe, meanwhile, any of those present betokening alarm,—possibly hearing them exclaim, 'Alas! shall not we also be involved in this terrible destruction?' 'Nay: dismiss your fears,' would be his reply. 'Saw ye not, a few hours ago, how I besprinkled our lintels and doorposts with the blood of a lamb? That mark, wherever it is made, will ensure to every Hebrew house and household immunity from the Destroyer. Only keep, as we are now, within the walls. To venture outside would be exposure to certain peril. Here we are safe!'

At that moment, may we give further license to imagination, and suppose, by a bold metaphor, that there is heard outside a sound as of rustling wings! It is the dreadful Messenger of vengeance. But that Angel's eye falling in the present case on the appointed blood-stain, he passes by the dwelling unscathed.

Not so with the habitations of others. Plaintive wail follows plaintive wail, as the discovery is made in every Egyptian home that there is a dead eldest-born! The frantic cries increase. Mothers, beating their breasts, rush from their houses in the delirium of despair. They seek Priest and Temple. They cry wildly to Osiris and Mnevis to be up and save them! But these oracles and deities are dumb. "They have ears, but they hear not."

And now the hour of longed-for emancipation has arrived. 'Up! let us be going'—Hebrew calls to Hebrew. 'Let our tears and chains be henceforth nothing but a doleful memory.'

It is done. Amidst the darkness of night,—relieved only by the light of the moon, and the silence broken only by the cry of the bereft Egyptians,—the country scarred with the marks of the recent plagues, the palm-trees struck down and blasted with the hail of God—the march begins. "Not a hoof is left behind:" Israel is free! The mighty army of liberated slaves have begun and effected their Exodus.

Brethren, let us gather around these significant emblematic teachings. If no passage in this ancient story of God's acts is more familiar, none is fuller or more suggestive to us of the Great Redeemer. With the utmost simplicity of thought and treatment, for the

subject will admit of no other, let us view "Christ, *our* passover, sacrificed for us:"—"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

In doing so, we shall briefly recall—or, if I may use the expression, 'outline'—and that in the order of the inspired narrative, the leading points in the olden type.

(1.) The first feature which strikes us is, that the Rite was of *Divine appointment*.

This significant Hebrew ceremony would never have been thought of by an Israelite himself. It would have been the last thing that would have suggested itself, on the concluding night of bondage, to kill one of the members of their flock and sprinkle door post and lintel with its blood.

The method of the Great divine Expiation for the sins of the world was pre-eminently God's devising. What human mind would ever have formulated such an idea, as that the Eternal would send to this apostate earth of ours, the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory, in order to effect, through a death of self-surrender and suffering, the emancipation and final salvation of His people? Surely if, in any respect more than another, God's ways are not our ways, nor God's thoughts our thoughts, it is that He should have "so loved the world, as to give His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but might have everlasting life."

(2.) Let us note next, the name and nature of the appointed victim:—*a Lamb*. The animal of all others that seems to suggest the idea of innocence and meekness. In the lion's whelp, with all its playfulness,

there is early discerned the incipient fierceness of untamable years. But a *lamb*, as it browses on the mountain side or by meadow and stream, is the recognised picture of gentleness and patience." Expressive emblem, surely, of "the Lamb of God!" It seems to us a poor reason which some have given for the selection of the Paschal offering, that it was what could most readily be furnished by the shepherds of Goshen from their herds. Let us see, rather, in this first simple element in the typical significance, what the writer of an after age calls, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." "*HE was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.*"

(3.) As a further expansion of this thought, the selected Paschal lamb was to be "*without blemish.*"

Plague-mark or disease or infirmity dare not attach to it. No animal would be accepted with torn fleece, or broken limb. A maimed member of the flock would be an insult to Jehovah, and would have vitiated the offering. The besprinkled blood of such would have failed to arrest the footsteps of the Avenging Angel.

Christ was "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." He "offered Himself without spot to God." As one flaw or vein in the marble fatally damages the sculptor's work: as one speck in the lens of microscope or telescope destroys its use and demands a recasting: as one leak would inevitably submerge the noblest vessel that ever rode the waters: so, one leak in the Mighty Ark of Mercy:—one flaw, one stain in the nature of the Divine Surety—the Image of the Invisible God,—would have been fatal to His

qualifications as a ransom for the guilty. Blessed be His name, the Lamb "slain for us," was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." What a host of witnesses conspired on earth to testify to His immaculate purity! His very foes were compelled to own and recognise His blameless, stainless life. The traitor who sold Him had to avow—"I have betrayed innocent blood;" the judge who condemned Him had to wash his hands, and declare, "I find no fault in Him at all." His own beloved Disciple, in after years, beheld Him in vision "girded with a golden girdle," "glorious in His holiness."

(4) The Paschal Lamb was not only without blemish, but "*a male of the first year*;" that is to say, had attained its full growth. It was the choicest of the fold. It was, in its lowly way, the type of absolute perfection.

Behold again, a yet additional attestation to the All-perfect Sacrifice! It may appear to some a very accidental and subordinate feature; but we think it cannot be overlooked, that the expiation for sin was consummated by the Great Antitype at the very age when manhood reached its prime. Vain is the attempt, save from unauthorised traditional sources, to form any definite conception of the outward appearance—the human form and likeness—of the Divine Son of God. We may each have our separate imaginings and surmises regarding what has been unrevealed. Chief perhaps among these, that just as with the best and noblest on earth, we generally find worth, purity, integrity, sympathy, and kindness, unmistakably reflected in face and feature: so it may have been with

Him "whose countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." May it not reasonably be conjectured, that whatever was most attractive and beautiful in man, was unfolded in the outer aspect of "the Altogether Lovely"? It surely adds to the touching thought of His death, that it was just when the adorable Saviour had attained all that was complete as the Ideal of humanity, that "He was taken out of the land of the living." The Heavenly Flower was cut down, not when in early incipient bud, but in amplest blossom. The pure white Lily bowed its head, not when the latent beauty was undeveloped, but when it had fully revealed its "calyx of gold." The Divine Tree of Life succumbed to the axe, not in the early spring when its branches were unclothed and the fruit unformed; neither in late autumn, with the leaves prematurely seared;—but in the full summer of its glory; when every bough was laden with verdure and hanging with richest clusters. The magnificent Temple fell, not when half upreared, nor yet when toil and suffering had left their lines and furrows on the gleaming marble; but rather, just when the top stone had been brought forth with shouting, and the cry arose, 'Grace, grace unto it!' If we venture to use human language, it was when this "Fairer than the children of men" was 'at His noblest and best,' that in divinest sacrifice He poured out His life-blood for us.

From this conjunct emblematic view of Christ as "a Lamb;" "a Lamb without blemish," "a male of the first year," let us take comfort. It required perfection,—the perfection of Deity and humanity, to

make Him all that we need as a Saviour. An Angel has a perfection of his own, but an Angel cannot redeem. His perfection is at best only the perfection of a creature;—the borrowed derived glory and lustre of the satellite. They “veil their faces with their wings” in token of conscious unworthiness. The perfection of Christ is underived:—His the alone perfection that can be accepted as substitute for *im*-perfection, and by reason of which He can thus address His Church:—“I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save!”

(5.) The Paschal lamb was *separated from the flock and kept alive four days*. This formed a further Divine injunction, as you will find by reference to the detailed instructions in the opening of the chapter from which our text is taken. (Ex. xii. 3, 6.)

Christ, as we have already seen, was designated for His atoning work and sacrifice in the counsels of the Father from the foundation of the world. Ere the true Paschal Antitype was slain, the world was left 4000 years (four millennial days, as an old writer expresses it) to work out the problem of its own self-restoration. God seemed to say, I will set apart the Great appointed Sacrifice for these specified eras, to let the nations test their ability to save themselves;—to solve, if they can, by their own intellect and reason; by their laws of progress, their astute philosophies, their “moral consciousness,” the all-momentous question, “How can man be just with God?” The solution of that problem, after the long period of waiting and probation was—“The world by wisdom” (its own boasted wisdom and civilisation; its moral

codes, its political expedients and scientific theories) "knew not God!" Then, the fulness of the time came, and God sent forth His only begotten Son.

(6.) The Paschal Lamb, after being presented "on the fourteenth day of the first month, at full moon, between the evenings,"—*was slain*. At the celebration of the rite in Egypt, with which we are now especially concerned, the head of every household officiated as sacrificing priest. But when they reached Canaan, and in subsequent times, each offerer seems to have brought his separate lamb to the Tabernacle or Temple, where it was killed by Levites. The blood was poured, at all events in the Temple service, into gold and silver basins. These were handed along a row of officiating priests, until they reached the altar upon which the blood was finally cast. In either case the Paschal Lamb was a sacrificial offering—a *propitiation*.*

Brethren, here is the foundation truth of the gospel ;

* It may not be out of place to remark, though most may already be cognisant of the fact—that perhaps the only spot now in the world where the old Hebrew rite is still performed with something of its original character, is on the top of Mount Gerizim by the Samaritan Jews. The writer was a month too early on a visit to Palestine to be personal spectator of the scene. Those who have been eyewitnesses dwell especially on this feature of blood-shedding. "Several sheep were laid on their backs in a moment, whenever the sun is seen to set 'between the evenings,' touching the ridge above the plain of Sharon, and six youths, with a wild cry and brandishing their long knives in the air, drew these across the throats of the struggling victims, and those present are marked with the streaming blood."—See Dean Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, in loc.

“the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Yes, the “sprinkling;” for observe, that under the varying forms of observance in earlier and later Jewish times, this expressive action was rigidly preserved. Not enough for you or for me is the slaying of the Lamb: in other words, the mere historical fact that the Divine-human Victim died. There must be the saving application of that blood to the conscience: a personal individual interest applied for and found in the great salvation:—“He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.” Vain for us will it be to sit down at our great New Testament Feast unless conscious that the lintels and door posts of our hearts, as a great spiritual reality, have been marked with the covenant token, and that we are resting in Christ as our only Saviour. We have seen that nothing but the sprinkling of the blood could have saved from the Avenging Angel. The Israelite might have piled buttress on buttress, pyramid on pyramid, to effect exclusion. He might have strengthened his dwelling with bars of brass and pillars of iron, lintels and doorposts of cunning workmanship. The Destroyer’s weapon would have cleft them in sunder.

“Neither is there salvation in any other.” The work of Jesus must stand alone in all its solitary grandeur and sufficiency. “When I see the blood”—“*the blood*,” says God—“I will pass over you.”

Omitting several additional interesting typical lessons on which time forbids to speak, I shall conclude with one other reference—the final injunction to the Hebrews regarding their offering; viz., that after the

carcass of the victim was "roast with fire," * it was to *be eaten*: the *whole* was to be eaten, nothing was to be left.

In the modern Samaritan celebration of the rite, no part would appear to be more strangely interesting, than the guests, under the light of the full paschal moon, gathering around and consuming the carcasses of the slaughtered lambs. There is, moreover, the same rigid adherence to the old command, that nothing was to be unconsumed; so that if any morsels remain, they are carefully gathered up and placed on mats and burned. Fires and candles are lighted, and the ground searched in all directions, in case of any fragment being overlooked. "Ye shall let nothing remain until the morning, and that which remaineth until the morning ye shall burn with fire." †

What, among others, is one great spiritual lesson here inculcated? That it is not enough to rest satisfied with the initial act of pardon and forgiveness through the

* This portion of the type can only *suggest* to us, but surely with solemn and awful impressiveness, the intensity of those sufferings endured, "for us men, and for our salvation," by our Divine Surety. Shall we regard it as specially emblematic of those soul agonies of which the anguish of Gethsemane and Calvary formed the outer exponent: and which reached their climax and consummation in the appeal to a forsaking God?

† We can well recall, on the occasion of our visit to Mount Gerizim, a hollow cave or hole dug and prepared for the purpose, where lay the calcined bones of the victims that had been sacrificed at the previous passover. Some fragments picked up are still retained as memorials. The fuel for the burning of the carcass consists of the dried grass, herbage, and stunted shrubs which clothe the upper part of the mountain.

blood of the cross. Christ must not only be looked to by simple faith, but in His own expressive but much misunderstood and misinterpreted words and simile, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except" (in a lofty, spiritual sense) "ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, ye have no life in you."

In a very especial manner, dear friends, is that typical feature brought before us to-day. You recall the words of Institution uttered by the Great Master of the New Testament Feast. These are not "Take, *look*," (this would have been sufficient had it been a commemorative occasion and no more); but He significantly says, "Take, *eat*." It is a covenanting, strengthening, grace-imparting, nourishing Ordinance. By partaking of the Sacramental bread, and drinking the Sacramental wine, there is expressed, in the outer act, the necessity of what the old divines call "appropriating the Redeemer and all the benefits of His purchase." The ordinance, received by faith, not only "doth signify, but seal, our ingrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's." *

Brethren, "Let us keep the Feast!" and as we "go to the altar of God, unto God Himself our exceeding joy," let us do so with the cherished, familiar litany on lip and in heart: "O *Lamb of God*, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!" "O *Lamb of God*, that taketh away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace!" †

* General Assembly's Shorter Catechism.

† I may venture to observe, in a note, how in various pagan

systems, and some of these in comparative later centuries, we have dim, but often very terrible traditional reflections of much that has been suggested to us in the preceding type. In no case, perhaps, more so than what we find in connection with the religious history of the Mexicans (the Aztecs) immediately preceding the conquest of Mexico by Cortez, in the 16th century. The facts are circumstantially detailed in the pages of Prescott and other authorities. Human sacrifices—holocaust on holocaust—were yearly offered to propitiate their Supreme deity—a veritable Moloch,—whose image in his chief temple was bestudded with gold, pearls, precious stones, and coils of golden serpents. Among those that were thus immolated, one victim seems to have been specially selected by the reigning monarch, on account of his personal beauty. He was required to be without stain, or blemish, or disfigurement; and also set apart for a whole year. During this period, unlike the true Man of Sorrows, he was made the recipient of high honour;—pampered with delicacies; regaled with rich perfumes and incense, and attired in royal garments. At the expiry of the year, when the day of sacrifice had come, he was conducted in a royal barge across the lake, on the opposite shore of which rose a temple with a pyramid-altar, and surrounded with thousands of human beings. He was then farther led bound by a train of priests up the steps, and on the summit was slain by them with frightful accompaniments of cruelty. A distortion truly—but one of the many hideous distortions which we find in the rites of heathendom of the one Great Sacrifice for the sins of the world.

XII.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

“There shall be a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come to the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel.”
—Isaiah xxx. 29.



IN the previous solemn services of to-day, our minds were directed to the typical significance of the first Passover in Egypt; which we endeavoured to connect, by many remarkable particulars, with our own New Testament celebration.

I have thought I could not more appropriately wind up and close our sacramental meditations, than in the words just read from the great evangelical Prophet. They have reference to an interesting custom in the keeping of the Paschal Feast during subsequent ages of Hebrew history; when, year after year, every Israelite went up to Jerusalem. The multitudes which thronged thither from all parts of Palestine were in the habit of travelling by *night* as well as by *day*;—proceeding in bands or companies; cheering one another with the voice of psalms and sacred songs, or with the simple music of pipe or tabret.

What a rush of thought must have filled the bosoms of these Pilgrims, as, under a clear passover moon, and making the valleys resound with their melodies, they drew near the City of Solemnities, to commemorate the mightiest epoch in their national history! Many and varied, we may suppose, would be the voices composing these night-strains, from the tremulous accents of the aged patriarch, who had traversed oft before with hardier step the same journey, to those of the youth, who was now, at last, to have the ardent longings of boyhood realised,—personally to be spectator of the glorious things spoken of the City of God. We may imagine, as the secluded villages and hamlets, from the slopes of Lebanon to the borders of Idumea, poured out their groups, how many and pleasing themes of converse there would be by the way. Some, who, it may be, from varied causes had left their homes in sadness, disconsolate and desponding, would be cheered and invigorated by the sympathy of congenial minds. It would be a season of holy fellowship meetings between Israelite and Israelite. The voice of united prayer would mingle with that of praise: while the one object of their journey, the one keynote of their song, would cause every heart to thrill with gladness, “Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!”

But in due time, the solemnities are ended. The highways of Palestine are again thronged with the returning worshippers; these highways, lighted up with the waning passover moon, and its troop of attendant stars. The dead of night, once more, resounded with the Songs of Zion.

How many fresh thoughts must have crowded the

minds of these wayfarers! How varied the feelings with which they would muse on the now ended festival! *How brief* (would not one of their reflections be)—*how brief has been the joyous season*. It seems but yesterday we were entering with bounding hearts within the Temple of our Fathers, and here we are again bidding it farewell. We looked forward for a long year to this festive meeting. It has come and gone. The vow has been made,—the votive offering rendered. The sacred Gates are closed; and we are retraversing the road to our distant mountain and village homes! Brief, is our experience also, are earth's best and most hallowed seasons of festal joy. We eat our paschal supper, as if, like the old Hebrews, with girded loins and sandalled feet and pilgrim staff—all indicative of pilgrim haste. The everlasting, uninterrupted, unending Festival is above; where the guests are assembled and associated, not for a fleeting hour, but for eternity!

The thought most appropriate to us, at this part of our service, is, that these Jewish wayfarers *returned to their several homes to resume their usual occupations*;—the wonted routine of everyday common life. They had been for days—perhaps weeks, unfamiliar with scenes of worldly toil. The labourer's busy task had been suspended. The vinedresser had laid aside his pruning-hook, the husbandman his plough;—the fisherman's nets were spread on the shores of Galilee, and his boat slept on its shadow as it was moored to the rocks of Capernaum. A deep, unworldly solemnity had reigned within Jerusalem, as the nation, at the bidding

of its God, kept its high holiday. But the hallowed Portals are shut:—The Feast is over: the old heritage of work must be undertaken: the festive and holiday garments must be exchanged for the ordinary attire: and as the groups hasten back to their homes along the highways, and by the plains and valleys, they see the tiller of land again in his field—the shepherd again with his crook in the midst of his flock;—the Hebrew sailor has started afresh with his Tyrian cargo, and the fishermen on Gennesaret are again preparing for a night of toil.

So it is, brethren, with us. After the most sacred festal and sacramental seasons, the world's business and cares necessarily reassert their claims. Its din and bustle, must again be heard and entered;—and labour, God's own appointment—yes, gracious appointment—resumed.

BUT—think we, would these old Jewish worshippers (those who were worshippers indeed) in casting off their holiday attire, cast off also their holiday and festive spirit? In the midst of the coarse contacts of daily existence, would the recollections of the Jerusalem Festival no longer linger in their memories? Nay, rather, would not these Songs of Sion still haunt their ears and hang upon their lips?—would not the shepherd be heard chanting them in the midst of his fleecy charge by green pastures and still waters? would not the fisherman warble them in his nightwatch on the Lake? and the sailor as he bounded over the Great Sea, and the dim mountains of his Fatherland were receding from view? would not the cottager, as he reached his home among the hills of Kedesh or on the

spurs of Hermon, evening after evening, in returning from his toil, gather his little ones by his knee, and rehearse to them the joyful remembrances of the holy season?

Be it ours, dear friends, while we leave the New Testament Feast, and engage—as engage we must—in our daily avocations, to carry the hallowed memories of it along with us. These Communion seasons, though only brief pausing places in life's pilgrimage, are intended too as Arbours for spiritual refreshment and revival in the ascent of the "Hill Difficulty"—to brace and strengthen for the everyday road which is again to be traversed, the steep and rugged mountain again to be climbed. While anew wearing the world's dress, and grappling once more with cares and duties, forbid that we should know, with regard to spiritual things and holy resolutions, the world's oblivion power;—that we should suffer its engrossments to sweep our solemn impressions away—as the ripple marks on the sand are effaced and obliterated by the first rising tide! Rather, in resuming our varied tasks and employments, let it be, with our hearts overflowing in gratitude to Him who summoned us to the place of solemnities, to ratify His covenant and give us festive pledges of His love. As we leave the banqueting-house, be it ours to take up in spirit the very strains which hung on the lips of returning Hebrews: and with heartfelt devotion, mingled with resolutions of new obedience, to say, "What shall I render unto God for all His benefits?" "The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel: He will bless the house of Aaron:

He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great."

"*Them that fear the Lord, both small and great.*"—Among the multitudes of Jewish wayfarers resuming the familiar road to their native homes, none does imagination follow with deeper and kindlier interest than the *young* worshippers;—those who had gone up to Jerusalem to gaze for the first time on the City of the Great King—to render their first offering, and pay their first vow. Many mothers in distant localities of the land would doubtless, during his absence, follow with prayerful emotion her son's earliest journey, and wait with trembling solicitude to hear the impressions of a never-to-be-forgotten pilgrimage. Are we wrong in thinking, that the character of not a few youthful Israelites would be permanently moulded and influenced by that momentous era in opening life: that, with regard to not a few of them, the words of their great Psalmist were happily fulfilled—"Of *Zion* it shall be said, the Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this one was born here"?

And surely, if there be, among those who have come up to-day to our Gospel Passover, any whose circumstances are more interesting than others, it is those of *young communicants*.

How solemn and important this step in your spiritual history! One cannot but feel, with regard to most of you who have encompassed for the first time your Lord's table, that your characters too are just forming; that it depends much on the resolutions which you have now taken, and the manner you carry them out,

what your future is to be. You have put your hand to the plough: see that ye turn not back. Oh endeavour to *act* out, and *pray* out, and *live* out, the firm resolve, that "whatsoever others do, as for you, you will serve the Lord." Be life's vista long or short, may you never cease to cherish a lively remembrance of your earliest passover vow:—that it may be with you as with the young Hebrews who, in leaving Jerusalem after their first festival, cast a lingering tearful glance on the Gates that were closing behind them—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning,—if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,—if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

To all here present, young and old, would I repeat the benediction which has more than once been breathed upon you: that in "peace you may go from the Table of the Lord, and that the God of love and of peace may go with you!"

Among many other reflections which occurred to the Hebrew Pilgrim when the feast was over, and he found himself returning again to his home, would not this assuredly be one—"Shall I be spared to be there again?"—shall I ever again tread these hallowed courts? It may be, *this* is my last Passover. Ere another such season comes round, I may be laid in the sepulchre of my fathers. My next Passover!—It may be in the New Jerusalem. I may be called to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven!

My brethren, many of our former Communion feasts,

as well as to-day's, have reminded us of the precarious tenure which binds us to earth's best blessings; and can we suppose it will be different in those that are to come? Or rather, will not new, solemn, warning bells be tolling in our ears? Oh, let this be the home question with each and all of us, as the Sanctuary doors are about to be closed: If to-day I have registered my last communion vow, prayed my last communion prayer, sung my last communion song: if the summons, ere another Sacramental Sabbath comes round, were heard by me, which once fell on a patriarch's ear, "Get thee up and die,"—would I be able to respond "I am ready!" and looking, by faith, within the portals, on the great Communion Feast and Sabbath of Eternity, to say, "Open to me the Gates of Righteousness, I will go in to them, and I will praise the Lord"?

Meanwhile, let us return to our several homes, with new and more devoted purposes of obedience, with a higher *ideal* of what Life—may I even add, what Religion—should be? that it dare not, cannot be restricted to Sunday hours or Communion Seasons: that it is not a thing of the lip,—of talk, or theory, or dogma, or barren speculation: neither is it expressed by moping countenance, or sullen and moodish divorce from the world's duties and business, its smiles and joys,—but a great abiding, permanent *principle of action*. It is full of *deeds*. It tells on the *character*. It proclaims its presence and power by gentleness, and meekness, and patience, and unselfishness; by benignity and kindness; willing if need be to make sacrifices for Jesus, with the ever-present remembrance of the

sacrifice and the cross which He so meekly accepted and endured for us.

As on this winding up of a Communion Service many years of solemn responsibility lie behind us, uttering their thousand conflicting echoes of hope and joy, of fear and sorrow :—let the recording Angel stay his flight, until, once more, the one supreme message finds its meet parting utterance, and we are permitted yet again to urge upon one and all of you, old and young, rich and poor, to close with the free, full, glorious offers of a Great salvation. In that divine Master's name, around whose Table we have gathered this day ;—I adjure you, by all the bliss of heaven ; by all the solemnities of judgment ; by all the realities of eternity ; by all the love that we have been commemorating ; by Calvary's Cross and Calvary's Saviour ; by His agony and bloody sweat—by His Cross and Passion—by the spear that pierced His wounded side and the thorns that wreathed His bleeding brows : flee, oh flee to that most gracious Redeemer,—flee, oh flee “from the wrath to come !” Though it should be the last sentence I ever utter, the last proclamation I ever make,—let that blessed Name be in it. Let it be enshrined in all its unspeakable and unutterable preciousness—Jesus only :—Jesus wholly :—Jesus first, last, all in all ! Hark ! does not the ear of faith even now listen to a song stealing down from the Church triumphant ? It is from the guests within the veil !—the white-robed multitude at the great Communion Feast and Sabbath of glory. We have been identified and associated with them this day throughout every portion of our holy service. The same song

has been thrilling on our lips, the same Name has been weaved like a golden tissue in our mutual anthem, "*Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood : and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father : to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen !*"

"From these blessed hours we borrow
Music that shall linger long,
And the labours of to-morrow
Shall be cheered by holy song :
Followed still by chanting voices,
We may tread life's rugged way,
Ever in our hearts repeating
Anthems that we sing to-day."

PART II.

I.

*PRIVATE MEDITATIONS PRECEDING THE HOLY
COMMUNION.*

MEDITATION BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

I.

"*The Master is come, and calleth for thee*" (John xi. 28). These familiar and memorable words were spoken at Bethany on a very different occasion from that of a Communion Season. But they may be warrantably and appropriately adapted as a summons and invitation to the Great Feast of love.

Jesus at all times is invisibly nigh to His own people. As doubtless, though unseen, He marked every tear of sorrow in that Bethany home during the mysterious "tarrying days" beyond Jordan,—so on His throne in Heaven is He still ever imparting and manifesting, by His grace and Spirit, the comforting sense of His presence. But there are times and seasons when He draws especially near; and at no time nearer, or more graciously, than at this His own blessed Sacrament of Communion. In these memorials of His bleeding love, He is evidently and impressively "set forth crucified and slain." In the preaching of this blessed Gospel I *hear* of Him. In the Holy Ordinance of the Supper I *am* privileged emblematically to *behold* Him. There, as in the case of Mary and Martha, He summons me to His feet, to listen, on that hallowed ground, to utterances of love and promises of glory.

He takes me, as He did them, to a *Grave*:—but it is that of no human friend. It is the Sepulchre into which He Himself entered as my Surety and Substitute. It is to see the Grave-stone rolled away for ever; and over these symbols of suffering to hear Him proclaiming, as He did to the Bethany sisters, that He is Himself the Resurrection and the Life, and that because He lives, His people shall live also.

How does the summons sound in my ears? “The *Master* is come.” Do I—can I—respond to the Name? Am I able, experimentally, to rejoice in Him as ‘*Rabboni*, my Master,’—an all-sufficient Saviour; whose blood has purchased a full, free, everlasting remission of my sins; and whose intercession is so prevalent at the right hand of God, that I am warranted, as I meet Him at this Bethany-gate of love, to say in the words of Martha’s first utterance—“I know that even now whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee”? Yes! that mourner of Bethany presents me with a divine watchword, a golden key for the Table of Communion. The riches and promises of grace are to be there, in visible emblem, spread out before me,—the garnered blessings of Salvation “hid in Christ;” and whatever be my trial, or weakness, or infirmity, I am encouraged to behold the Sceptre of the Heavenly King stretched forth, with the challenge and invitation—“What is thy petition, and what is thy request?”

“I will hear what God the Lord will speak:—He will speak peace unto His people.” I will go to His appointed Ordinance, and there unburden and unbosom to Him all my wants and necessities. He will not send me empty away. “Jesus wept.”—He wept tears of sorrow

as He stood before Martha and Mary in the Bethany graveyard; but this day He is to manifest Himself, in significant symbol, as shedding, not His tears, but His blood. He gives me the blessed pledge and assurance that He will, after the greatest of all boons and blessings—the gift of *Himself*, freely dower me with every lesser mercy. The Table is about to be spread; the Feast is prepared; the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. As, in the name of the rich Provider, I listen in thought to the summons, as if from some herald-angel—"The Master is come, and calleth for *thee*;" be it mine to respond—"I will go into Thy House with burnt offerings, I will pay Thee my vows." Lord, to whom can I go but unto Thee, Thou hast the words of eternal life! Bring me to Thy Banqueting-house, and let Thy banner over me be love! Hide me in this Cleft of the Rock, and let all Thy glory pass before me!

MEDITATION BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

II.

"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him. I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found" (Hosea xiv. 8). The whole of this precious chapter—a jewel among the Minor prophets—consists of a dialogue between a penitent and his God; and seems peculiarly suitable as a theme for thought and reflection, in the prospect of this day's solemn Ordinance. May

I seek devoutly to commune now, alike with my own heart and with the great Heart-Searcher. Be it mine, with the docility of a little child, to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!"

God Himself begins the conversation:—He is the first to address overtures of mercy to backsliding Ephraim. We might have expected words of threatening, and upbraiding, and retribution. But there is no terror in His voice. They are rather the tender breathings of a fond father over his erring and wayward children. The marvellous entreaty and expostulation break upon our ears—(v. 1, 2) "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and return to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips."

The invitation is obeyed. Humbled and sin-stricken, yet overpowered by a sense of the divine forbearance, they pour out a full confession of their guilt. Hitherto, they had been trusting to an arm of flesh; but they now recognise where their true strength lies—(v. 3) "Ashur (or Assyria) will not save us;—we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." The Lord hearkens. He gives ear to the penitents' breaking of heart, and replies—(v. 4) "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Even Ephraim, the apostate and obdurate—we might have

deemed irreclaimable—listens to the gracious pleadings. As the scales are falling from his eyes and the chains from his soul, he feels the desire rising within him to give himself to this God in whom compassions flow. As he awakes from his sleep of death, the past, with all its record of sins, passes before him. He gets a glimpse into the chambers of his spirit. He sees they are thronged with idols—usurpers of Jehovah's rights. Amazed that so long, in guilty unconcern, he should have surrendered himself to these, he exclaims, in words of unqualified renunciation—"What have I to do any more with idols?"

Taking this one verse for my present meditation, let me note, as an intending communicant, these three points:—*The Penitent's resolution. The Divine recognition. The added Promise.*

(1.) Is this my vow and resolve, in the prospect of meeting God at His Holy Table—"What have I to do any more with idols?" In my case, as in that of Ephraim, it may well be a resolution evoked by the contemplation of God's wondrous, unmerited love. Guilt and unworthiness have been met with long-suffering kindness. How often have I fainted and grown weary of Him; yet He has never fainted nor grown weary of me! What determination can be more fitting, when about to stand, so to speak, under the shadow of Calvary's Cross,—contemplating alike the mightiest manifestation of God's mercy and the mightiest testimony against sin? With such affecting memorials and symbols before me of my own transgressions, and of the awful price demanded for their remission, may I be enabled firmly to resolve, that all

which dishonours and displeases Him shall be dethroned, saying, 'O Lord my God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me. But this God shall be my God for ever and ever.'—"What have I to do any more with idols?"

(2.) But the conference—the dialogue—does not end here. The verse admits us further into the secrets of the audience-chamber. We have, next, *the Divine recognition*:—"I have heard him and observed him."

What can be more touching? No earthly auditor may have listened to Ephraim's breathings of self-reproach. The penitential sighings of his broken spirit may have fallen on no human ears except his own. But *One* eye, though not of earth, marked these tears. One ear listened to the groanings of the travailing soul. The Almighty Spectator and Hearer now discloses Himself—"I have heard him and observed him!" Beautiful picture, surely, of the interest God takes in His children! His anxiety for their peace and happiness; the delight, above all, with which He hears the still small voice of penitence:—the wail of conscious yet sorrowing estrangement,—longing through tears for restoration—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" He is watching these feeble pulsations. The tear wept in secret He has registered in His Book. The cry heaved in solitude has been borne to His Throne, and entered with acceptance into the ear of the God of Sabaoth. "I am poor and needy," said the Psalmist, when he was himself buffeting the waves in a midnight of gloom:—but he adds the experience of Ephraim—"Yet the Lord thinketh upon me" (Ps. xl. 17).

(3.) This, however, is not enough. With my foot

about to stand on holy ground, I cannot help forecasting, with trembling anxiety, the future. So it was with penitent Ephraim. He remembers how frail he is. Even with the consciousness of new love and fresh consecration, he recalls past backsliding and declension. He is filled with desponding fears for the days that are to come. Memory cannot obliterate the just upbraiding and reproach for former treachery and unfaithfulness—"O Ephraim, your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hosea vi. 4). No strength in himself, the tender sapling dreads the hurricane. Help he needs; where is this help to be found?

God meets his case and mine, with a twofold promise of *Protection* and *Grace*. "I am like a green fir (or cypress) tree. From Me is thy fruit found." The cypress-tree—alike so beautiful and so common in Eastern lands, with its long, tapering, graceful form and its dark clothing—was one of the precious woods employed in the Temple of old; and forests of them are still to be found in the less frequented parts of Lebanon. From its undying verdure, owing to a perpetual supply of sap, winter and summer,—so dense, moreover, and strong in foliage, as to afford shelter and nesting-place even for the stork (Ps. civ. 17)—it forms surely an appropriate type, in inanimate nature, of the sheltering protection, safety, and security, the believer has in God!

If I am now self-distrustful,—troubled with misgivings for the days to come;—let me be cheered with the assurance of Him who has promised to be a shelter from the storm and a covert from the tempest. He

reveals Himself here to me as an Almighty Friend; who will fortify against all temptations; unravel all perplexities; and overrule all providences for my well-being. He will impart strength in the hour of weakness, and courage in the hour of despondency, and peace in the hour of trouble, and victory in the hour of death.—“I,” says a protecting God, “am like a green fir-tree.” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

May I not further think of that green fir-tree, as pre-eminently the emblem of my gracious Redeemer;—the God-man Mediator,—“the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden”:—its roots struck in the soil of humanity; its top reaching to heaven:—the “Brother-born,” yet “mighty to save”? He makes known, elsewhere, the secret of continued support—“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke xxii. 31, 32). “I have prayed for *thee*.” A sinking disciple, a praying Master: Satan tempting, Christ upholding,—“From *Me* is thy fruit found!”

Let me take, as the motto and watchword for an unknown future—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me:”—“By the grace of God I am what I am.” By the aid of that promised grace, may I be enabled specially to keep close underneath this Heavenly Fir-tree:—to live near to Jesus. The tribe of Ephraim, whose soliloquy I have been pondering, was selected and honoured to follow immediately behind the Ark in its way through the wilderness. Let this be ever my coveted position,—not on high

Communion Seasons only, but all through the pilgrimage,—to be close to Him whom that Ark symbolised, as my Protector and strength and salvation. Let the song of the many thousands of Israel be mine to-day; let it be mine from week to week and from year to year, until Grace is merged in Glory :—"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Thy strength, and come and save us!" (Ps. lxxx. 2).

MEDITATION BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

III.

"Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast-day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob," &c. (Ps. lxxxix). The 81st may be called "The New Moon Psalm," or "The Psalm of the Silver Trumpets." While these trumpets were blown every morning, at day-break, in preparation for the morning sacrifice, they were specially sounded at each New Moon. There was one occasion, specially designated "The Feast of Trumpets," which took place on the 1st of the seventh month, the holy month of the Jewish year,—when, instead of the one matin blare, their sound was heard all day long, accompanying the eucharistic and expiatory sacrifices. A longer preliminary blast summoned the worshippers to prepare for solemn service. They are reminded in this Psalm of the divine Institution and authority of the Feast: "For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob."

One among other designs of this Jewish Festival, was to prepare the hearts of the people for the celebration of the Great Day of Atonement.

The silvery tones of the Gospel trumpet are sounding in my ears its herald notes for to-day's Gospel Feast. How solemnly and vividly is the Jewish great Day and Feast of Atonement recalled, with its wondrous typical significance; when the High Priest of the nation sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat! He disrobed himself of his gorgeous dress,—his tiara of gold, his ephod and sparkling jewels,—and was arrayed in a simple garment of spotless white. Meet emblem and prefiguration surely of Him, who divested Himself of His eternal glories, and came into our world attired in the pure white vestments of a holy humanity, to suffer and die;—Antitype alike of priest and victim. Alone He went into the most Holy Place, the divine presence chamber; alone He carried the censer; alone He sprinkled the blood:—"I have trodden the wine press *alone!*"

I am to see all this, to-day, in impressive symbol:—the blood sprinkled *on* the Mercy-seat and *before* the Mercy-seat. In the blood cast, or sprinkled on the pavement "before the Mercy-seat," I behold a type of the blood of Jesus speaking peace to His people on earth: "above the Mercy-seat," speaking peace from before the Throne, where He now pleads as Intercessor. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

I would seek to hear the preparation-trumpet calling

me to devout thought and meditation in the prospect of the great Gospel Festival:—"Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed; on our solemn feast day." It was a universal belief of the Jews of old, that on this their Feast of Trumpets, Jehovah seated Himself on a Throne, and that His people "passed before Him as a flock of sheep before their shepherd." In the presence of a heart-searching God, let me listen to the New Testament exhortation of the Great Apostle, as he too, in a spiritual sense, sounds the herald note—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Let my feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, as now the summons is heard—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!"

Yes, "*thy* God." This is His own message to me, and to each intending communicant. Let me hear it addressed in this Psalm (verse 10th), "I am the Lord *THY* God: open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." He will there—at His own appointed ordinance—reveal Himself as *my* God in Covenant; and, if I 'open my mouth wide,' *i.e.* if I go with longing desires after Him and longing earnestness for His help and blessing,—He will not mock my approach by sending me away unblest. "He satisfieth the longing soul with goodness." True to the closing promise of this new-moon Psalm, He will feed me with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock;—with spiritual treasures hid in Christ, the true Rock of Ages,—will He satisfy me (v. 16).

MEDITATION BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

IV.

"Come, ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark vi. 31). The hour of noontide rest was a special one of old in Palestine: when the labourer suspended his toil; when the oxen were unharnessed from the yoke, and the ploughshare reposed on the upturned furrow; when the Caravan of Pilgrims, as they may be seen to this day, gathered under the shade at some well, eating bread and fruit, with their burdened camels moored around. In a diviner spiritual sense that noontide rest is about to be mine. "Come," is the Saviour's gracious invitation, addressed to His disciples of old—"Come, ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile." "This is the rest wherewith He causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." Let the world be for a little time shut out: its cares hushed, its duties and business suspended; as with my fellow-communicants I repair to the Well of Living water, the Fount of Gospel mercies "springing up unto everlasting life," and there "rehearse together the righteous acts of the Lord" (Judges v. 11).

Let me note, as its chiefest and divinest feature; it is rest in the fellowship of the Great Master. It would have afforded little joy or refreshment to His disciples if they had been sent away to that desert place alone. This brief season of suspension from work would have been denuded of all its blissful peace and holy gladness, had they been unaccompanied by

their Beloved Lord. The consciousness of that Presence and Love and Sympathy was all in all to them. They did not heed the passing away of the splendid vision of the Transfiguration Mount, when in their descent in the grey mists of early morning, "they found no man, save *Jesus only*" (Matt. xvii. 8). The summons from the Table of sweet communion on Zion, to the mysterious gloom of the Kedron and the Olive Garden, had sufficient music and heart-cheer to them, from *one* word embraced in it—"Arise, let us go hence." "And when *they* had sung an hymn, they went out (together) to the Mount of Olives." A subsequent night of unrecompensed toil on the Sea of Galilee was all forgotten in the morning's joyful recognition—"It is *the Lord*!"

So is it with Master and disciple still. That Feast of love has its holiest, sweetest, most consecrating thought in this, that it is "the *Lord's* Supper." It is the presence of the King which makes it, in the truest sense, a *Communion*. "There," is His own promise, "I will meet with thee and commune with thee from off the Mercy Seat." If Thy presence, O Saviour God, go not with me, carry me not hence! May I be able to say, both in the prospect and retrospect, "He brought me to His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

We have need of such "quiet resting places" in the Pilgrim journey; breathing-times amid the din and turmoil and harassing cares of the world. Let me now leave its soiled garments, its coarse wearing drudgery, behind me in the outer court; and un-

embarrassed and unencumbered, enter with sacred footstep to be 'alone with Jesus.' Many are the circumstances and seasons when the choicest of all His sayings is applicable,—none more so than regarding this "Feast in the desert,"—"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

MEDITATION BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

V.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song of Sol. iv. 16). Come! Blessed Spirit, in all the plenitude of Thy gifts and graces: and as I am about, this day, to go to the sacred Feast, breathe upon me and my fellow-communicants, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" Come, as the North wind;—bringing with it conviction of sin—my own sin—seen in the light of my Saviour's Cross and sufferings. Come, as the South wind;—with all soothing, comforting, sanctifying influences,—bearing on its wings the Beloved's own balm-words of mercy:—revealing the wonders of His love,—the tenderness of His sympathy,—the riches of His grace. Let the spices—the fragrance of a grateful heart filled with all joy and peace in believing—flow out. One of the sublimest prayers on record, is that of the Apostle, for the special bestowment of the Holy Spirit preceding the dwelling of Christ in the soul: a beautiful and befitting prelude-utterance

to a Communion season and service:—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." "He shall glorify Me," says the Redeemer Himself, "for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Awake, then, O North wind! come, thou South, blow upon my garden! Make this sacramental season,—one in which heaven and earth seem to touch one another;—an occasion of hallowed and blissful intercommunion between my soul and Jesus. Yes, 'intercommunion.' The joy of this permitted fellowship, delightful to His people, would almost seem, with reverence be it spoken, as if shared by His own Infinite heart. The Beloved comes into His garden "to eat *His pleasant fruits*."—"I am glorified," says He elsewhere, "*in them*." Who can ever fail to be struck in the Gospel narrative, with the intense—the vehement earnestness of the Saviour's longing to meet His own disciples at the first institution of the Supper, immediately before His death? His own soul was—I was about to say—*strangely* engrossed with the preparation and arrangement for it. "*With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*" (Luke xxii. 15). The disciples, knowing and noting how singularly that Festive hour seemed to fill their Lord's thoughts, came to Him and said—"Master, where wilt Thou that we go to prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?" When they met the man bearing the pitcher of water, they address him thus:—"The Master saith, my time is at hand, I will

keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples." Moreover, when the Feast itself was being partaken, the season of hallowed and confidential fellowship proved evidently to Him a sweet "song in the night"—a gleam of joy amid the gathering, thickening darkness:—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It is the same now as it was then. While to all disciple-guests it is primarily a blessed occasion and opportunity of unburdening their inmost thoughts to their divine Lord; of having faith strengthened,—love deepened,—misgivings lulled,—troubles healed,—they may exult in the assurance that it is distinctively also a season of complacent joy to the Redeemer Himself. The blessedness, felt and realised by His covenanting people, is most deeply shared by the true Solomon:—It is "the day of His espousals, *the day of the gladness of His heart*" (Song of Sol. iii. 2). As the Great Master of assemblies, He there sees of the fruit of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. "*Satisfied!*" wondrous thought! as if His own intensest joy were in the happiness of His redeemed people. "Father," He said, on that same betrayal night, when fresh from the Institution of the New Testament Passover, and when the shadows of His own Cross were projected on His path—"Father, I *will*:"—(what is this mighty boon which Omnipotence is about to invoke at the close of His intercessory Prayer? It forms the climax of His pleadings; as if He had reserved the crowning solicitation to the last)—"Father, I *will*:"—(with what does He fill up the formula?—He knows that He can write under it what He pleases:—what then is the great

yearning, filial wish—the richest reward and recompense of His soul-travail?)—"Father, I *will*, that they also whom Thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!"

May that glory—the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—may the distant rays of it, at least, be revealed to me, to-day, on the holy ground of Communion. May the meeting in the earthly Garden prove a blessed pledge and foretaste of that diviner communion and fellowship in the better Garden above;—that Garden in which there is no sepulchre, no funeral spices, no "why weepest thou?" whose precincts can be invaded and saddened by no sin—no sorrow;—no broken vow or forgotten resolution;—no Lebanon storms to dread; no "lions' dens or mountains of leopards" (Song of Sol. iv. 8), but where disciple and Master, and that for ever and ever, shall rejoice together with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

II.

PRAYER BEFORE THE COMMUNION.

O Lord, I beseech Thee to draw near to me this day in Thy great mercy. I have the near prospect of approaching Thee at Thy gracious Sacramental Ordinance. As Thou art preparing for me a table in the wilderness, do Thou prepare me for the table. O send forth Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me: let them bring me unto Thy holy hill and unto Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. May it be my experience within the gates of the Sanctuary, and while partaking of the Sacred Feast,—“This is none other than the House of God, this is the Gate of heaven;”—“I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.”

Fill me with a humbling sense of my own demerits and shortcomings. I am not worthy to eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's Table; how much less to be seated at the banqueting Table itself, and to enjoy the blessedness of near and endearing fellowship with Thee. Come, Lord, and search me:—Come and try me: Come and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting. Impart, above all, an inspiring and elevating sense of Thy great and infinite love to me in Christ

Jesus. At this, His own commemorative Ordinance, may I have a realising apprehension of all that mystery of agony and suffering He so willingly endured for me. May the near sight of Gethsemane and Calvary give me deeper and intenser views of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as that which filled His cup of anguish. May I be enabled, as I go afresh to this covenanting ground,—not only to confess my sins, but to have the hearty desire and resolution to forsake them; and to live, in the time to come, not unto myself—but unto Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, that He might redeem me from all iniquity, and purify me unto Himself, as one of His own peculiar people, zealous of good works. My earnest prayer is, to be brought more constantly and habitually under the constraining influence of redeeming love:—that the life Thou hast preserved by Thy mercy, and which Thou hast ransomed at such a price, may be henceforth consecrated to Thy praise. May the blessed Feast prove a hallowed means of strengthening within me every Christian grace, and of confirming every good resolution. May this be my earnest aspiration, ‘Lord, evermore give me this Bread.’ Like Thy servant of old, in the strength of that meat, may I go on, from day to day, till I reach the true mount of God above.

Bestow Thy blessing on all my fellow-communicants. There is bread enough in our Father’s house and to spare. May those who through sickness and other restraints of Thy providence, are unable to go to the Courts of Thy Sanctuary, know that Thou art not confined to temples or to tables made with hands,—

that wherever there is a true worshipper, there, there is a prayer-hearing—a prayer-answering—a covenant-keeping God. May they that tarry at home divide the spoil.

Bless Thy ministering servants who are to be this day the dispensers of the Holy rite. As they deal the Bread of Life to others, may their own souls be abundantly satisfied. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Thy saints shout for joy. The Lord bless the House of Israel;—the Lord bless the House of Aaron: both small and great that fear the Lord, do Thou surely bless them. So may this appointed Ordinance prove, to each and all of us, a season of reviving and refreshing from Thine own immediate presence.

And all I ask, or hope for, is in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

III.

AFTER ADDRESSES TO COMMUNICANTS.

AFTER ADDRESS TO A YOUNG COMMUNICANT.

I.

This is a momentous era in your spiritual history. The anxious prayers and longings of fathers and mothers have, to-day, been fulfilled. Perhaps some beloved relatives who have left the Supper-table on earth, have been looking down upon you with sympathetic interest from the heights of heaven, and rejoiced to see you making this good confession before many witnesses. Thank God you have had the moral courage to make an open avowal of your faith in Jesus, and your reliance on the peace-speaking blood of His Cross. While other of your associates are still halting between two opinions:—while other vessels have broken loose from their anchorage and been driven on the rocks; you have publicly testified your fervent desire, in a strength greater than your own, to make provision against the coming storm. May you never have cause—(you never will)—to regret having laid the green ears of your young affections on God's Altar. Early life is a glorious season to give to Him. Not sowing the wild oats of youth and settling down in old age into a gloomy, selfish, conventional pietism:—the scoffer and the reprobate in the morning, and the hooded monk at evening: but appropriating, in a

figurative sense, the words of the Great Master—"Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me *from the beginning.*"

This last summer, over and over again, did I note how gloriously the early sun lit up the glacier Alps and transmuted their snows into burnished gold, clear to their summits: while, on the other hand, at mid-day, the clouds often gathered—the glory was gone; and the traveller, by neglecting the early start, lost the grandeur and charm of the landscape. May you, as the morning climbers of these Alps of God, be rewarded by bright and unclouded views of the Better Land. May this first Communion be enshrined in your dearest memories as that wherein your hearts were fully and for ever consecrated to the Lord who died for you. That grand Psalm will have a brighter and more blessed meaning if you make it a "morning song"—"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxxi. 1, 2). Keep near to Him. Live under the realising need of His sustaining grace. What is the secret of the expansion and development of the tender buds of tree and plant in outer nature?—What is it that weaves in the silent loom the lovely green drapery which gradually spreads its mantle over the earth? It is yonder sun in the heavens:—the glorious fountain of life and light and joy. It is the divine Sun of Righteousness who, in the case of those who "look to Him and are lightened," will expand and unfold their early graces. Avoid everything that would intercept His light, or cast a shadow upon your souls. With a hallowed remem-

brance of this day's service, be ready to say to every tempter and temptation—"Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God:" scorning the world's crooked ways and base compliances;—the fear of God and the love of God actuating all your deeds and permeating your daily life:—taking this as your motto—"Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus;"—and thus transfiguring, what, with others, may be the secular and commonplace, into what is sacred and sublime. It is a happy thing for all of us, but specially for you, to know, in words very familiar, but whose truthfulness and beauty redeem them from commonplace—

"There are, in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

AFTER ADDRESS TO A YOUNG COMMUNICANT.

II.

"I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me" (Gen. xxxi. 13). While that God of Bethel delights to see the Pillar erected, and the consecrated oil poured upon it by all, He pre-eminently rejoices to behold these

votive pillar-stones lovingly reared by youthful pilgrims, and high resolves uttered by youthful lips. It is worthy of remembrance that when Jacob erected that Altar of stones, it was "early in the morning." When the sun was lighting up with its first rays the mountain heights around, he poured the consecrated oil upon the top of it. You have wisely set up your votive pillar in the morning of your days, and it will be a happy preparation for the future journey. It is a never to be forgotten epoch in a young life, when that life is voluntarily dedicated to the Saviour at His own appointed Ordinance; a dedication perhaps, in the case of some, which has been made, not without the penalty of obloquy and scorn. Who that loves Christ, does not feel thankful and glad when they see youthful soldiers of the Cross coming and saying, like Bunyan's man in armour at the Gate—"Put my name down, sir, for I too am to be one of the Host of the Lord"?

You are standing on the threshold of life's awful Temple. The future hours have been surrendered to-day to noble purpose—to goodness and to God. The all-momentous question, in this crisis of your moral and spiritual history, now is—Is it to be with you loyal adhesion, or unhappy defection? fall or victory? Early blossoms are easily blighted: but by watchful care they can be nursed into abundant fruit. "The wing of good resolution," it has been said, "is easily broken;" and if so, there ensues a swift and fatal paralysis of the spiritual life. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up as eagles. It is an important thought, though it sounds a truism, that yours is not the case of older Communicants, whose

Christian character is formed—stereotyped. With you, the types are only being set. They can be shifted and changed at will. The Book of your future history has yet to be printed and completed. Is it to be a blemished volume,—its pages soiled with unworthy interpolations—blotted with sin?—or is it to be a consistent record of faith and love, truth and purity, manly endurance, active Christian charity? “At my first visit to the fairest of Italian cities, I was arrested, as all travellers are, with the two well-known colossal works of Michael Angelo,—his statues of ‘Morning’ and ‘Evening.’ Both equally challenge admiration. But there is one marked difference between them; doubtless accidental, so far as the great sculptor was himself concerned, but which has conveyed, to more than one spectator, a suggestive spiritual lesson. The figure of Evening is finished. Every feature of the face has received its last touch: the chisel could do no more. It is a type, in breathing marble, of the close of existence—the completed character, the moral expression fixed for ever, incapable of alteration. With the other—the figure of Morning—it is different. The face there remains in rough outline. We can only discern the initial strokes of the master. All the delicate work of hand and tool still remain to be effected.”* There are sermons in these stones. Young Communicant, it is with you “the Morning.” Your soul-features are yet unchiselled. Habits, and character, and bias, are still to be formed and moulded and developed. These, we trust it may be said, have been happily indicated to-day. Yet, oh remember,

* *The Author's “Eventide at Bethel,”* p. 45.

(if I may be allowed to give another turn to the metaphor) the chisel is in your own hand. With yourself rests the progress and completion of the great life-work : —to go on, from this hour, shaping the features of “the inner man,” till, like the illustrious Florentine in his Evening statue, you are brought to assume the calm restful sleep of ‘the beloved’—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. You have the possibilities which others have not, because they have outlived them, —of a glorious future before you. Let “likeness to Christ” be your highest aspiration, however far you must necessarily fall short of the Great Ideal.

You have set up, to-day, a *Memorial* pillar at the Memorial Feast, with the inscription upon it—“He loved me, and gave Himself for me!” Be it yours to set up also a *Votive* pillar, with the counterpart inscription, “I will pay Thee my vows which my lips have uttered.” May your Holy Communion be a bright spot in life’s retrospect, identified and associated with fresh resolves in the way of holiness, which is the only way of happiness and peace. May it be yours thus to enjoy many years of the green pastures and the still waters of the pastoral Psalm. And when, in the Great Shepherd’s good time, the dark Valley is at last reached, may He draw near to you in His own infinite love; and vouchsafing you rich and gracious experiences of His presence, say—“*I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me.*”

AFTER ADDRESS TO A YOUNG COMMUNICANT.

III.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word" (Ps. cxix. 9). Of all who have gathered to-day around the Holy Table, none are watched with such interest as those wearing the fresh, white, unsullied robe of a first Communion. No travellers on whom more hopeful regards are centered, than those whose feet have just been shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. God keep you from ever sullyng your festal robe, or marring the sweet cadence of your festal song! God help you to preserve the purity of early innocence, unstained and inviolate; the gold of the pilgrim girdle untarnished! Blessed is the consecration of young life! "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

Every day, remember, of this golden youth of yours, is formative of your future character. What you now are, will determine what you will be. Your pilgrim path may be a chequered one, it may be environed with peril and temptation. But trust Him implicitly who has promised the needed guidance and grace and strength. In doing His holy will, He gives the pledge of a present recompense of happiness and peace, and a future of endless bliss and glory:—"I will make the places around my hill a blessing; the rain will come down in its season, there will be showers of blessing." "Manifold more in the present life: and in the world

to come, life everlasting." Ask your aged fellow-communicants—those who are joying in the anticipation of the heavenly rest and home, what to them has made earth's hours and pilgrimage happiest? They will tell you, it is not material good—money, or lands, or houses; far less flippant superficial pleasures. But it is the conscious presence and favour of God, the blessing which emphatically "maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it:" hallowing prosperity, and mitigating adversity.

As a great practical thought in connection with your votive service of to-day, strive to prevent noble resolves degenerating into mere sentiment, by not converting them into deeds and realities. It is well said by one of the suggestive thinkers of our age—"Better no speech unless speech that is to be followed by action." Better not to kindle feeling, if the emotion is to evaporate and not to be followed up by corresponding energy. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do (not 'think it,' or 'plan it,' or 'purpose it,' but) *do* it with thy might." The divine Master of the Feast has bequeathed to each of His young pilgrim disciples, for their conduct, the great resolve which impelled and regulated His own—"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh wherein no man can work!"

Yes, and we best manifest "the spirit of Christianity" by seeking to conjoin deeds of love for the Redeemer with deeds of lowly love and mercy for His people. These two indeed cannot be dissevered. In sympathy with them, you are in sympathy with Him. He accepts what is done to His suffering and needy children, as if

it were done to Himself. By having in your hands to-day "the Holy Cup," I am reminded of one of the most familiar of poetic myths or legends which more than one Minstrel has weaved into song. It is an incident in the tradition of 'the Holy Grail.' The knight is pictured as having ridden forth in the quest to far distant lands. His quest has been unavailing. In returning homeward with plumes tarnished, and armour rusted, and heart weary and sad, at the baffled efforts of his pilgrimage,—he spied on the road, stretched on the ground, a wretched beggar, imploring in his thirst and faintness a draught of cold water. The warrior dismounted his charger. With unmailed hand he filled, from the wayside brook, the empty cup dangling at his side, that had been the companion of his own wanderings, and put it to the parched lips. In the act of doing so—so runs the tale—the search of years was in a moment discovered. While stooping over the miserable outcast, performing this deed of mercy and compassion, the water in the cup was transformed into sacred Blood. Not in the toil and peril of knight-errantry; not in holy lands or under oriental suns, or amid deeds of fame and combat; not under "lordly hall or grange," had he realised the dream of life and won the longed-for prize. It was revealed and given to him in an act of self-sacrificing love. In ministering to the wants of the least of Christ's brethren *he found the Holy Grail*. The strange but beautiful legend needs no exposition or application. The Master you have avouched to be yours to-day has graciously said, that the cup of cold water given in His name will never go unrecompensed.

AFTER ADDRESS TO A YOUNG COMMUNICANT.

IV.

Young servant of Christ,—you who have come for the first time to-day to a Communion Table, I envy you! Do you ask me, how? I reply, because you have the entire path of life still to traverse. I am persuaded that not a few, far advanced on the pilgrimage journey,—who, moreover, with grateful hearts can set up their Ebenezer and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,” would gladly also, were it possible, begin existence anew. They feel that if they were to start on the voyage again, they might do better; they might do nobler things:—avoiding rocks on which they have grazed; and instead of creeping listlessly along shallow creeks, or lying at inglorious anchor, sleeping on their shadows, they might be out on summer seas and amid summer breezes with every sail spread to the wind. *You*, at least, have that future in your hand. The voyage is all before you. Be brave and noble and true. And although you have (you *must* have) your alternate storms and calms, joys and sorrows, strangely intermingled;—you never can be truly unhappy:—you never can be bereft of friendship, with the riches and the Friend you have chosen to-day. And should you at any time be tempted to act the traitor’s part: should “the world, the flesh, and the devil”—that triumvirate of evil—ever try to cause you to make “shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience,”—*think of this votive hour*: that, as God’s covenanted servants,

you bear on your souls and bodies "the brand of the Lord Jesus." Leave behind you the Table of Communion, saying in the words of the well-known hymn—

"My heart is fixed, Eternal God,
Fixed on Thee :
And my Eternal choice is made,
Christ for me !"

May He guide you with His counsel : sustain you by His grace ; and at last receive and welcome you, amid the assembly of Angels and the spirits of the just made perfect.

"The spirits of the just!"—We may have been called, to-day, to take note of those who, like yourselves, still in early life, have been translated into the ranks of those 'perfected' ones :—those who had little more than assumed the festal robe and plighted their early troth and allegiance to the Great King, when summoned, at a bound, from the Earthly to the Heavenly banqueting Table ;—from 'the Palace Beautiful' below, to see the King in His beauty and the land which is no longer 'very far off.' Let us rejoice that God has a Beautiful Palace—a *more* Beautiful Palace in heaven for His sons and daughters than here. He loves to fill its chambers with the brightest and the best. He colonises His own glorious realms with the fairest and ripest and heavenliest from a present evil world. He often saves his dearest children the wilderness tornado and storm. It is to His most beloved He says—"Friend ! come up higher !" He leaves blank the places and spheres they adorned below, only that they may engage in the ceaseless activities of the glorified. We

may well say of them, with reference to a better Sanctuary and a nobler Communion Feast—"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House: *they will be still praising Thee.*"

IV.

AFTER ADDRESS TO AN AGED COMMUNICANT.

Each returning Sacramental Sabbath emphasises the thought to us all, that we are nearer eternity. These sacred seasons are shadows moving athwart the dial-plate;—or as if another hour were tolled on the great clock of Time. With special solemnity and impressiveness does this reflection come home to aged communicants. Some of you can look back, through a long vista of years, to the hour when you approached for the first time the Holy Table. How many who then gathered with you are left? The pastor who dispensed to you the mystic symbols,—gone! The father and mother who looked with proud and tender interest upon you; following you with prayers and tears to the hallowed ground—gone! Those who shared with you in receiving the Bread of life, and talked over the sacred service on the Sabbath eve,—many of them—most of them—gone! It is a tale that is told. Ay, to some, there are many more remembered faces of that old throng amid the congregation of the dead, than among the worshipping living! And the time *will* come—(*must* come) sooner or later,—who need dread it if they are living prepared for the supreme moment

and the irrevocable summons?—when others will pronounce our names, and say of us, ‘They are no more!’ Who can tell, but that the Master may this very day have, all unknown, been whispering in the ears of this one and that one, grown grey in His service:—“Ye shall henceforth no more drink of this fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom!”

Aged friend, you have been permitted to wait once more, on God, in His own Ordinance. Spiritually, may He renew your strength. He has ‘latter rain’ as well as ‘early rain’ to bestow:—a blessing on those girding for the fight:—a blessing for those unbuckling their armour. The Temple-lamps in the Jewish Sanctuary were lighted ‘at even.’ If the night-shadows of your life be falling, and with you the day be far spent, may you be able to say, “THOU wilt light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.” Beautiful is the promise—“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of THE LATTER RAIN: so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain” (Zech. x. 1). May you be privileged to go on—in what still remains of your pilgrim way, rejoicing: leaning, as a staff for very age, on the faithful promises of a covenant-keeping Jehovah: preserving the torch of faith and love and holiness undimmed to the last.—So that you may be able, like the weary exhausted runners in the Grecian games of old—to hand it, undiminished in brightness, to younger athletes, who are waiting to bear it—as witnesses for God and His truth, when you are gathered to your fathers.

Go in peace, from His table; and may the God of

peace and of love go with you. Amid dimming memories and diminishing friends, "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." May your holy approach to the holiest Ordinance of earth, be to you the foretaste and antepast of the eternal Feast and rest which remaineth for His believing people. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God!"

V.

AFTER ADDRESSES TO A MOURNING COMMUNICANT.

AFTER ADDRESS TO A MOURNING COMMUNICANT.

I.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour" (S. John i. 35-39). We had our meditations directed,

to-day, to this beautiful incident in the early Gospel narrative:—the two fishermen friends and companions from Bethsaida of Galilee—having pointed out to them, by the Baptist, a Greater far than he:—“Behold the Lamb of God!” They are at once attracted, in some mysterious way, by HIM who had just returned to the banks of the Jordan from the temptation of the wilderness, where, for forty days, He had been without home or shelter. They hesitate to intrude: not venturing to address Him or to disturb His meditations;—still they follow His footsteps, in the direction of His temporary dwelling;—a dwelling probably, like that of the other pilgrims who had gathered around the Desert Preacher:—some leafy tent close to the river side or under the shadow of a rock, made of interlacing boughs from the adjoining woods. “Rabbi, where dwellest thou?” was their simple request, full of humble yet confident faith and trust. His response was immediate, a word of kind welcome;—“Come and see.” His voice, His look, His demeanour reassure them. It was the truth of a future saying anticipated and illustrated, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” That long afternoon and evening were spent in loving fellowship with that Gracious Master, whose devoted consecrated servants they were ever after to be: enjoying an immediate three years of blissful personal communion, and when that was terminated and His visible presence withdrawn, believing, they still rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What the themes of meditation were, during these thrice hallowed hours, we cannot tell. May not their

thoughts naturally have grouped themselves around the Baptist's suggestive exclamation—"Behold the Lamb of God"? John was undoubtedly one of these two disciples. And we know that these words lingered in his ears like a strain of heavenly music, and filled his most seraphic visions fifty years afterwards, when he wrote the Apocalypse. How the divine emblem seemed almost to absorb his recollections! Thirty times is Jesus there spoken of as a LAMB. Retaining that first never-to-be-forgotten glimpse of his divine Redeemer, the writer seems to have lived, and suffered, and died, beholding "*the Lamb of God!*" How long, moreover, this interview in the valley at Bethabara lasted, we are not informed. Probably it was far on towards midnight ere they departed. The bright stars and paschal moon may have been shining on the white cliffs and foaming waters when the two disciples came forth, at the close of the most momentous day of their lives. Who can doubt, that they would return to the distant Bethsaida-home with their souls filled with the one wondrous theme and thought—"We have seen the Lord!"

Our experience to-day has been identical with that of these favoured disciples. We have received a gracious invitation to partake of nearer and more confidential communion with our divine Redeemer. "Master, where dwellest thou?" Thou Son of the Eternal God, yet the Divine Brother-man—alike the Taker-away of sin and the Remover of burdens from laden-hearts: where dwellest Thou? that we may come and unburden our heavy secrets: and, like these two disciples of old, away from the din of the multitude,

sit at Thy feet and behold Thee as the Lamb of God? "Come and see"—has been the gracious response. We have obeyed the summons. We have beheld, in impressive emblem and memorial, the Great Propitiation, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The leafy tent or covert of the Jordan has still its glorious spiritual counterpart and reality. "There shall be a tabernacle (a tent) for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." "A MAN shall be, as an hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest, . . . as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!" Afflicted communicant!—Pilgrim of sorrow,—you have resorted to your Lord's Bethabara-dwelling, at His own gracious summons, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But while your season of fellowship has doubtless been hallowed and comforting; when you come forth from it now, it is, like these same two disciples, to face the dark night again: the dewy tear-drops on the dank grass: the cold moon-shine;—the glimmering stars and the roll of Jordan. Yes, 'the roll of Jordan,' with the saddened memories it may be of those who, in the familiar and accepted figure, have recently crossed it; and whose companionship is gone for the for ever of time. You walk along, pensive and sad, to mingle, once more, in the noise of the wilderness tents: back again to-morrow to Bethsaida, to your smitten home—to gaze on the vacant seat: to miss the old voice and the sympathetic ear, into which you could have told how your heart burned within you, while He talked to you by the

way, and you sat under His shadow with great delight ! Ah, perhaps it was the very smiting of that earthly home which drove you, to-day, to ask, with more intense fervour and more impassioned prayer, as you missed the earthly friend, "Master, where dwellest THOU?" "My best earthly prop is gone. Oh, Messiah Jesus, I come to Thee ! I come now to Thine own appointed dwelling-place, that I may unfold all my grief, and get these heart-storms lulled with Thine Omnipotent "Peace, be still" !"

As you now pursue your saddened way, let not the darkness blind your eye to this day's sight and vision. Let not that roll of Jordan dull your ears to this day's exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God !" Suffering one ! fix your gaze on that Sufferer of sufferers :—that wounded, bleeding Lamb of God. Think of that wilderness of temptation from which He had just come ! See Him, there, assaulted with hunger, thirst, cold, weariness ; tempted in body, assailed in spirit ; and this by the arch enemy of all. Yet He meekly endures ! He is the Lamb "dumb before His shearers !" Say, can you murmur where He murmured not ? Seek, rather, to honour Him more and more by a closer following of His divine footsteps. Go forth, even in the dark, with the fretted waters at your side, and star after star of earthly hope expunged from your firmament, meditating on His faithfulness and love, even "in the night-watches !" Rest assured, if, as you journey on, you try to utter through your tears, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,"—He will, as with the Bethsaida disciples, give you glorious surprises : meeting you, now on the distant

lake : now in the busy city : now in "the high mountain apart ;" until, from these chequered earthly experiences, He takes you across the true Bethabara ("the house of passage") to be with Himself in the tearless land for ever !

AFTER ADDRESS TO A MOURNING COMMUNICANT.

II.

"Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?" (Job xii. 9).

God has been addressing a twofold voice to-day to those who have gathered at His Holy Table.

To some, He has been speaking in prosperity. New gourds have been given,—new fountains of blessing opened. The dreaded cloud, big with disaster, has passed. The pecuniary loss has been redeemed or compensated. The shaft of death has been turned aside : the dear one hovering on the confines of the dark valley has been restored. The chair in the family circle has not been emptied. You have been spared the awful word which falls on the heart like the crash of a descending avalanche.

To others—to you—He has been speaking by adversity ; by crushed hopes and blighted joys,—early and unlooked-for graves.

Afflicted one ! if your sorrows are great, have you not had to-day vividly brought before you, in touching symbol, the memorial of sufferings, in comparison with which, your deepest and intensest are light indeed. In

the contemplation of these, you have not only the revelation of the Heart of a loving, sympathising Saviour, but the pledge and assurance that the God who gave His Son would not, and could not, visit you with one needless pang, or put one redundant thorn into your chaplet of woe. Be assured, it is for the spiritual good of His children that He sees meet, ever and anon, to put a scar, so to speak, on His people's most treasured earthly joys. It is said in a striking passage of Isaiah—"The day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures" (Isaiah ii. 12, 16). Yes, on these "*pleasant pictures*" He deems it meet, at times, to stretch forth His hand, and sweep the portrayed vision of gladness away:—He may have seen it was eclipsing and dimming His own likeness on the soul. You may remember the great Artist who painted the lofty ceiling of the Roman Basilica. High up on the giddy platform, his eye is on some 'pleasant picture,' on which he is just putting his finishing touches. Absorbed in the triumph of his genius, he has left his position, in order to obtain a broad, general view of the gigantic work. But he has forgotten his danger. He is stepping back, and yet farther back, to the edge of the scaffolding. A few inches more, and he will go reeling down to the marble pavement, a hundred feet beneath. What can save him? It is a moment of thrilling suspense. Life is trembling in the balance: verily there is but a step between him and death. One who was assisting sees, at a glance, the imminent peril. With the speed of lightning, his determination is formed. On he dashes towards the work of the

Master, and, with apparently presumptuous hand, plants a deep scar on the moist fresco. The Artist rushes forward to avert the blow. It was enough :—all the other wanted :—It destroyed the painting, but it saved the more valued life. How often is this God's method of dealing ! He sees us on the world's giddy eminences ;—going back, back, back, to certain ruin. He hastens to the rescue. He places a seemingly remorseless, destructive hand on our most cherished objects of pursuit ;—blurs and scars life's loveliest visions. He breaks our hearts, that He may save our souls ! “ *The day of the Lord of Hosts is on all pleasant pictures !* ”

Seek to honour Him by un murmuring submission to His holy will. Let your chastisements, for the present not joyous but grievous, lead you to live nearer Heaven and nearer Him. So that, if, at some subsequent Communion season, you too should have your place vacant at the Sacred Feast, your name may, like that of some one mourned to-day, be missed by your fellows, and never mentioned but with the sigh and the tear.

Ah, if this be a day on which we are compelled to take count of blanks in the flock ;—sheep, that were wont to pasture with us, no longer to be found in the earthly fold ; it is surely the most elevating of Communion thoughts—(the word ‘Communion’ has no more hallowed interpretation)—to behold them, with the eye of faith, up in yonder realms of bliss, fed by the living fountains of waters in the presence and love of the Heavenly Shepherd ;—their voices falling in soft music on our ear, and charming us to follow after !

AFTER ADDRESS TO A MOURNING COMMUNICANT.

III.

"For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews iv. 15).

Afflicted one,—We cherish the hope that you have been able to-day to have your own sorrows soothed by close and endearing fellowship with the Man of Sorrows. We trust that Jesus, the Prince of Sufferers, has met you at His own Table, and solaced you, alike with the assurance of His exalted sympathy and with hopes that are full of immortality. Yes, even though the very sacredness of the Table of Communion—the sacredness of its associations with the 'loved and lost,' may have made, for the time, your sadness deeper, and the blank more real;—yet, like the two disconsolate Marys, hurrying from the spot dearest to them on earth, have you not been met by your Lord in the way? Has not Jesus, Prince too of Consolers,—peerless Comforter—been found standing, as in their case, on the very path of your trouble, ready to dry your tears and hush your sadness with the old joyous salutation—"Be not afraid"? He, the thorn-crowned King, whom you have seen through expressive symbol evidently set forth crucified, has been soothing your sorrows by pointing you to His own. His own! What a cup of suffering was that! filled to the brim! anguish which had its exponent in "the great drops of blood" and the Eloi cry! There are generally

some mitigations in the case of the severest earthly afflictions,—some drops of comfort mingling in the bitter draught. In His case there were none. “All Thy waves and billows have gone over me.” In that solitary, unsolaced hour, He could plaintively echo the prophetic utterance, “I have trodden the wine-press *alone!*”

But, blessed lesson to gather under the shadows of Gethsemane’s Garden and Calvary’s Cross:—“In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted!” Blessed lesson, moreover, to have learnt at that Holy Table, that, under life’s darkest experiences, there is a Brighter than the brightest material Sun to dispel the gloom; ay, and that after earth’s longest and dreariest night-watches, there is a “breaking in the Eastern Sky;” a joyful morning at hand, whose Sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself, but where the Lord your God shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Leave, then, the Communion Table behind you, with the vision of the Crown rising above the Cross: taking up this as your ‘Song in the night’—“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. iv. 17).

“Fainting and footsore toil we in the way;
No manna glistens in the desert sod;
Yet here, to earnest souls that kneel and pray
Is given—the Bread of God.

Resting beneath His Shadow cool and sweet
We gain fresh strength for conflict with our foes ;
Here the lone desert, with its sultry heat,
Doth blossom as the rose.

And though these earthly shadows, dark and dim,
Veil from our sight His blessed presence now ;
Yet faith, exulting, lifts her eyes to Him,
And sees the thorn-crown'd Brow !

Waves from the ocean of His mighty love
Break in rejoicing on the expectant shore,
Whisp'ring sweet voices of the Land above,
Where storms shall be no more."

R. H. BAYNES.

VI.

*PRIVATE MEDITATIONS AFTER THE HOLY
COMMUNION.*

PRIVATE MEDITATIONS AFTER THE HOLY COMMUNION.

I.

"And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, and He made as though He would have gone farther; but they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent" (Luke xxiv. 28, 29). Words spoken by two wayfarers, in all probability disciples—not apostles,—lowly men who were slowly retracing their steps amid struggling emotions of sorrow. It was, too, on their return from the City of Solemnities, at the close of the Great Jewish Paschal Feast, that Jesus met them.

The verses are surely appropriate for my own after-thought and meditation at a similar hour: and as it is the retrospect of a *Communion* season, I may well include in these thoughts my fellow-guests. The services of the Holy Table are over; but, 'LORD, abide with us!' It is 'toward evening.' The sun is westering. The gates of the Banqueting House are closed, and the Festal worshippers have dispersed—'LORD, abide with us!' 'Toward evening;'—In another sense this may be true with some who partook of the sacred Ordinance. Night is the emblem of sorrow and trial. Their walk to-day with their beloved Saviour may have been an eventide one:—the darkness may have been gathering,—the earthly sun setting or set.—Let this be their prayer—'LORD, abide with us!' It is 'toward

evening;’—with others the day of their life may be shortening:—their sun is past its meridian; the lengthening shadows portend approaching nightfall. In the prospect of the final and solitary hour, they too may breathe the invocation—‘LORD, abide with us!’ We are all of us, however diverse our age and experience, advancing on the pilgrim journey; the milestones are decreasing; the grains in life’s sand-glass diminishing;—Eternity is nearing. Every returning Sacrament; every month, every day, every hour, may well deepen the solemnity of the prayer, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent!”

How am I best to fulfil the vows and perpetuate the blessings of a Communion occasion? It is to take Jesus with me from His Holy Table;—the living, loving Brother on the Throne, as my *abiding* Friend;—to have the habitually realised consciousness of His presence and nearness. “He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for *without Me ye can do nothing*.” What is the strength and safeguard of voyagers in the midst of the storm? Is it not when the pilot is known to be trustworthy: when they can gaze with confidence on the serene undaunted countenance at the wheel, and the brawny arm steering securely through the roaring surge? If in going out from the peaceful quiet haven of a sacramental hour, perhaps recalling former experiences, I am dreading the power of temptation and my inability to meet it, let me look to my Heavenly Pilot. Abiding in Him, and He abiding in me,—a living union with a living God,—I am in safe keeping. Heart and flesh may faint and fail; earthly refuges may fail me;

earthly refuges may become refuges of lies. But He will be the strength of my heart and my portion for ever;—the only unfainting, unfailing Friend, in a failing, varying world. Oh, blessed be God, there is more than one Emmaus journey. I have been privileged to traverse that road to-day. Though no longer in bodily Presence, as when He trod this earth;—though now surrounded with myriads of glorified spirits, and worshipped as Lord of all, the Saviour's heart knows no change: His name is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He still loves to make Himself known to His people, as to these disconsolate wayfarers on the way to their village home, "in the breaking of bread."

The thought often occurs, in connection with cherished earthly friends who have fallen asleep in Jesus;—and I believe most of all at the hallowed sacramental hour,—are these "loved and lost" permitted still to hold intercourse with those they have left behind on earth? When the mysterious tie is snapped which binds soul to soul in sweet fellowship here, is there no invisible communion prolonged and perpetuated with the sainted and glorified? May we not be allowed to entertain the pleasing idea—that they hover still around us, and watch with tender interest our communings at this Feast of love:—the Sacramental Table a Bethel-ladder for the unfettered union of spirit with spirit—"the bridal of the earth and sky?" Who can tell? This, however, we do know, that what possibly may be a vain illusion with reference to the departed, is a sublime and glorious reality in regard to Jesus. The mysterious Stranger on the way to Emmaus is no

Stranger at His own Holy Ordinance. How many can tell as their experience of that hallowed ground—"He brought me to His Banqueting House, and his banner over me was love!"—or, like the disciples on the great Easter eve, "We have seen the Lord." If such be my retrospect to-day, I would plead with an ever-deepening, reverential earnestness—"Blessed Jesus! Thou Divine Master of assemblies—Abide with me from morning to evening; and from evening to morning again; for without Thee I cannot live; and without Thee, I dare not die!"

II.

"*Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?*" (Luke xxiv. 32). Such were the musings of the same two solitary disciples after pursuing the way to Emmaus in company with their Beloved Lord. Can I, in some feeble measure, endorse them and rehearse them? In my own case, and that of my fellow-guests, what may some of these musings and reflections be, in the hallowed retrospect of to-day's service?

(I.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with a deep sense of the evil nature of sin?* At the Holy Table, and in its impressive memorial-symbols, I followed in thought the Adorable Sufferer to the garden of agony. I beheld Him prostrate there, amid the chills and dews of that midnight hour,—drops of perspiration mingled with blood flowing down to the ground—the interpreters of superhuman anguish. The presence

of an angel from heaven is needed to strengthen Him. We can see no farther than the rim of the thunder-cloud:—we cannot penetrate the midnight of terror. Well may the Greek liturgy speak “of all the sufferings of Christ *known and unknown*.” “Now,” said He Himself, in entering on these, “is the hour and power of darkness.” Bewildered, fearful, panic-stricken, trembling, in a thrice repeated fervour of prayer He entreats that the mysterious cup may be allowed to pass from Him. Three times, as He seems to approach the brink of some awful precipice, He cries “Father, save Me from this hour!” His soul is “sorrowful,” “exceeding sorrowful”—“even unto death.”

I farther ponder the dread successive scenes of ignominy which followed Gethsemane, and had their climax on Calvary—

“Lo! a face to heaven in agony stealing,
 Stained of sorrow, but, soilless of sin,
 Sweat that in blood is breaking and streaming,—
 Praying for those that do strip Him and scourge Him,
 As a cross on His quivering shoulders they place.
 'Neath its burden He sinks while they mock Him, they urge Him,
 They crown Him with thorns, they spit in His face.
 They are lifting Him, bruising Him, piercing Him, nailing Him
 To the cross that is dyed in a red crimson flood.
 See, the sun hides his head, see the vapour envailing Him :
 Hark, the earth and the skies in the darkness bewailing Him,
 Who dieth for those that are shedding His blood.”

Why all this? Nothing of retributive punishment could there possibly be in that unparalleled endurance. “In Him was no sin:”—He was the spotless Lamb of God. It was, as our Surety-Substitute—that the Lord laid on Him (or as these words literally mean, ‘the

Lord caused to meet upon Him') the iniquities of us all. "He was made sin for us." Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being Himself made a curse for us. He was the true spiritual Atlas bearing on His shoulders the transgressions of the world. No other—no less a cause, will suffice to explain the awful inner meaning of the "horror of great darkness," and of that bitterest wail that ever arose from earth to heaven—"My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

Have I not seen, to-day, in these visible significant symbols—the *broken* bread and the *poured out* wine—what an evil thing that must have been, which brought the beloved Son of God—the Prince of Life—from the Throne in heaven and nailed Him to the Tree?

(2.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with sincere and poignant sorrow for our own sin?* My sin formed some drops in that cup of anguish—"He gave Himself for me." For me He descended to these depths of humiliation: for me He bared His head to the pitiless storm, and travelled on that blood-stained path,—a spectacle to devils and angels and men! My sins against light, and love, and warning, and mercy: my many faintings and backslidings;—my tamperings with temptation;—my murmurings under trial; my guilty repinings under providential dealings:—how do their vileness and ingratitude stand revealed under "the Cross and Passion" of the Almighty Sufferer! Well may I be subdued and softened and saddened at the

retrospect ; and resolve with a deeper, more unqualified and unwavering resolution, to hate in all its forms what was, in very truth, the crucifier of the Lord of Glory.

My sin—yes, *my sin* helped in evoking these most awful words that ever broke the trance of eternity—“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man who is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd” (Zech. xiii. 7).

(3.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with a lively apprehension of His great love?* The word of the Beloved disciple, spoken at a later time, could not fail to come, like a strain of holy music, at the Holy Table to-day—“Herein is love:—not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” That divine love is revealed and manifested elsewhere. Creation teems with its memorials and illustrations. It is warbled in every grove. It is whispered in every breeze. It is pencilled in every flower. It glitters in every sunbeam. The volume of Providence proclaims the same: “The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” Yet, at times, there occur, in both volumes, dark and perplexing passages that we cannot understand:—and where the only earthly explanation is—“Thy judgments, O God, are a great deep!” *But*—“herein is love.” Question as I may that love elsewhere;—looking, as I have been permitted to do this day, at these memorials of suffering and anguish,—beholding in visible manifestation the grace of the Lord Jesus,—who though He were rich,—rich in all the plenitude of the Divine perfections,—yet for our

sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich,—I can surely exclaim in adoring transport—"The love of Christ which passeth knowledge!" It will form the theme, the confession, the problem of eternity: and yet the ever renewed and baffled avowal will be—"Oh the depth!"

(4.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with an earnest desire to yield Him a new and more devoted obedience?* Is this, to-night, my devout aspiration and resolve,—that whatever others do, I will serve the Lord? that my existence henceforth, more than it has been, shall be a continued walk with Jesus, a life-long Emmaus journey? As He, in His infinite love and condescension, invited me to come to His Banqueting-Table, and in expressive sacramental symbols, ratified all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, so may I be ready, with the responsive vow—"Lord, here is my heart; take it; make it Thine own for ever. I am Thine by creation; I am doubly Thine by redemption." May all the varied discipline of Thy providence—all Thine appointed ordinances and sacraments and means of grace, only serve to bring me "nearer to Thee:" and lead me more habitually to recognise the obligation thus stated by the Apostle;—"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them."

(5.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with the blessed hope of His second coming?* At the very moment when He took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to these wondering men of Emmaus, we are told, He suddenly "vanished out of their sight." But it was only for a little time. The two privileged

and delighted guests hastened back to the upper chamber and the gathered disciples in Jerusalem; and lo! the Lord re-appeared with the salutation, "Peace be unto you!"

"A little while," says Jesus, "and ye shall not see me; and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go unto my Father." The first little while of the "not see Me" will, to His Gospel Church, soon be past; and the second great while of the "ye shall see Me" will ere long be here. The gracious Feast of to-day is, above all things, the Feast and pledge of the Second Advent: "Ye shall show forth the Lord's death *till He come.*" Oh, blessed prophetic memorial! which, like a luminous rainbow, thus connects the cross with the crown: one arc of that bow resting in the first festal chamber by the Kedron Valley; the other on the golden steps of the Great White Throne! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

(6.) *Did not our heart burn within us, with longing desires of spending an eternity of fellowship in His loving presence?* If this rill—this rivulet—of the sacred Ordinance I have been privileged to partake of to-day be so refreshing, what must be the great Fountain-head? If the Pisgah-view be glorious, what must be the Promised Land itself? If I have been listening by the shore to a few waves murmuring, 'God is love,' what will it be to bathe in the ocean of that Eternal love? Here, at the earthly Communion Table, I only see the Beloved "behind the lattice." He meets me on the Emmaus road, but it is "as a wayfaring man who turneth aside to tarry for a night." I go, as a guest; but it is, at times, too, with tearful eye, as I note

fellowships that are no more,—missing the music of voices that were wont to cheer, alike in going to the Feast, and when the Feast was over. What will it be in that Glory-Land where nothing can intrude to mar the bliss of uninterrupted communion: no note of discord to disturb the harmonies of the everlasting song: no veil of sin or sadness to intercept the vision and fruition of an ever-present Saviour?

I love at times to dwell on that picture of His Resurrection-life, when, early in a Palestine morning—all nature clad in spring's resurrection attire, a solitary Figure stood by the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, and addressed some weary midnight toilers as 'Children.' They were well-known accents of tenderness. The joyous word of recognition passed from lip to lip—"It is the Lord!" The day is coming, when 'that same Jesus,' in the morning of immortality, will be seen standing on the Heavenly shore, with the look of affection and the word of welcome: the region where no night darkens, no tears dim, and no shadows fall. Let me join with my fellow-communicants, in looking forward with bounding heart from the banquet on the earthly shore, to the eternal Heavenly one: where, with the plighted love of to-day as the master passion of our souls, we shall each be able with unhesitating sincerity to repeat the avowal made of old with trembling lip—"Lord! Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

III.

"Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 17). The Apostle John, left alone in Patmos, away from all congenial fellowship with loving human hearts, had doubtless often longed in his rocky solitude, for some token or manifestation of his Redeemer's personal Presence. When he called to mind the former privileged bliss of near and endearing intercourse with the Lord he loved, but which in a visible form he enjoyed no more,—the prayer of his lonely heart and lonely spirit must frequently have been—

• "Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!"—

That sigh—that prayer was not in vain. The vanished hand and the stilled voice were again felt and heard: He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me—"Fear not: I am the First and the Last; I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore!" The tears of his banishment were dried. He was made to forget the absence of a loved brotherhood of disciples and saints, in the presence of "One who sticketh closer than a brother!"

The same gracious words have been breaking on my ears to-day. This Holy Table is one of the special places and occasions—a spiritual Patmos—where Jesus loves to record His name, and where He commands the blessing, 'even life for evermore!'

“I am He that was dead!”—This solemn, mysterious truth I have been permitted significantly to recall through the symbols of His own appointment. But now, as the Table is left, He seems, in this still hour of reflection and retrospect, to bequeath for meditation the glorious counterpart assurance,—a glad watchward surely in renewing the beaten paths of life —“I am He *that liveth*,”—or, as that might be better rendered, “I am THE LIVING ONE:”—He that was dead “dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him!”

How blessed to be able to look up to the right hand of God, and behold, seated there, as my Advocate and Intercessor, not a stranger, but an ever-living, never-dying Friend: with a heart beating responsive to human sympathy. Not only, as God, able to save, but, as Man, able to compassionate:—feeling what is done to His people, as sensitively as if it were done to Himself. When I think that into the hands of this God-man Mediator has been committed universal rule and sovereignty: that He directs all that befalls me: that it is He who sends prosperity,—who gives the gourd and the sunshine;—that it is He who appoints the blight and the shadow;—that every trial is ordered by Him, and every tear permitted by Him,—I may feel sweetly assured that all is well. He has renewed to me, to-day, at His Sacramental Feast, the pledges of His love and tenderness;—so that this may well be a balm-word and a heart-cheerer alike in all time of wealth and in all time of tribulation;—a support and solace in every vicissitude of this mortal scene; hallowing joy, consecrating sorrow, dispelling my fears, lightening my

darkness, and at last smoothing my death-pillow—"I know that my Redeemer LIVETH!"

The words of a Brother Apostle seem like a comment on the above divine vision and voice of Patmos: "When Christ who is OUR LIFE shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." "The glorious appearing" of THE LIFE:—in other words, the second coming of his Lord, was the special theme and revelation of the Apocalypse. That mystic Book has well been called "the Book of *the Coming One*." It begins, in its opening chapter, with "Behold, He cometh with clouds!" It ends in its closing chapter, with a thrice repeated blast of the same silver trumpet—"Behold, I *come quickly!*"

The Sacrament of Communion may, with equal propriety and emphasis, be called—"The Feast of the *Coming One*." I have just been commemorating Him, in His first Advent, as the *Dying One*; when He came in humiliation—the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected,—and bowed His head on Calvary's Cross. But while a Feast of Remembrance, it is equally a Feast of anticipation. Every returning celebration is giving augmented power and reality to the divine words—"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away!"

Even His own people are prone at times, through wavering faith, to ask—"Where is the promise of His coming?" There is no sound of His footstep. The wheels of His chariot are tarrying: and outer nature, in her majestic unvarying sequences, seems to countersign the doubting thought, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." From this Mount of Ordinances the chimes of the Advent Bell break on

the listening ear. "Ever since, has this blessed Institution lain, as the golden morning light, far out even in the Church's darkest night, not only the seal of His presence and its pledge, but also the promise of the bright day of His coming." *

I have recently been privileged to stand, so to speak, on a divinely-built watch-tower, looking for that day-dawn—"the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the Great God our Saviour."

"Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." That Advent season has its date in a yet unrevealed future. Meanwhile, be it mine to be so living and acting, that the cry can never be heard too soon or too suddenly—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!"—Ever ready to hail Him with exulting welcome; and so at last, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and the festal throng of the glorified, in my Father's Kingdom.

IV.

"*I will go in the strength of the Lord God*" (Ps. lxxi. 16). The Feast is ended: but let me solemnly feel that the vow remains. The pledge to the Great Redeemer has been given: the fulfilment is to come. All the sincerity of this fresh consecration is yet to be proved: all the fidelity to the Heavenly Captain: all the loyalty to the Heavenly King. Will He who walks in the midst of the candlesticks—the Blessed

* Dr. Edersheim's "Life and Times of Messiah."

Master of assemblies, be able on the next similar sacred occasion to say of me, as He did to the Church of Philadelphia of old—"Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name"?

My position recalls that of the old Hebrew Paschal Pilgrims, which formed the theme of meditation to-day: as the silver trumpets proclaimed that the feast was ended;—and caravan by caravan, company by company, were seen retraversing the familiar highways to their several distant homes. The imperious call of work summoned them again to their appointed labours. Nor was there any incongruity between the two. Work—everyday work—the drudgery of brain and hand and sinew was a divine thing then as now. The Passover was not appointed, or designed to be, a perpetual Feast all the year round. Rather,—(one at least of its purposes was, apart from its commemorative object), to brace and invigorate for the duties of a busy world. These Israelites would doubtless carry back to their homes and their toil many hallowed festal memories. Their cares would be lightened,—their sorrows soothed, their faith quickened; their devotion to the God of their Fathers deepened and intensified, by all they had witnessed in the City of Solemnities.

In common with my fellow-communicants I now leave the New Testament Passover Feast to retrace the beaten paths of life; to return, some of us to its green pastures and still waters, and the sunshine slopes of its 'Delectable Mountains;'—others, to its 'Hill Difficulties,' its Marah pools and valleys of Baca. But, along with higher and diviner verities there taught, may we all feel it, as it was designed also to be, a

strengtheners in the discharge of daily duty :—the old tribal blessing and beatitude of Israel's God resting upon us,—“Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, and Issachar in thy tents.” The Lord God our Sun and Shield :—grace given us in this world, and the reversion of glory in the next (Ps. lxxxiv. 11).—Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

This suggests a similar lesson from a different portion of God's Word, which also formed subject of recent contemplation. It is the beautiful vision of the girded angels given in the Book of Revelation (xvi. 1); and to whom the words were addressed by the Great Voice out of the Temple :—“Go your ways.” These angels had been listening with rapt reverence to the song of the Harpers by the glassy sea. But the hour of duty had come. Forth they go to the world beneath them, to execute the behests of their divine Lord.

Am I leaving the “Temple of the Tabernacle of the testimony,” like them, “clothed in white and pure linen, and girded with golden girdles”? Am I about to return to my daily avocations with the blessedness of the pure in heart who have seen God? resolved, in a strength greater than my own, to keep my garments clean—“unspotted from the world :” having my loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness : desirous to follow the path of obedience whatever that may be :—filling my earthly sphere for His glory and my neighbour's good : ready, when my task is finished, to bring, angel-like, the emptied incense bowls of service, and lay them at the Master's feet, saying—

'Lord, I have sought, however unworthily and imperfectly, to do Thy holy will'?

"Go your ways," says God. What the ways before me may be in this uncertain world, I cannot tell. Be this my comfort, that the summoning Voice is His.—*"The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him."* There is elsewhere given the promise and assurance—"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

It is not the resolutions of a Communion season I must trust to. Rather, it is the going out into the world which will test and try their reality. Who has not read of the Roman legions of old, in pursuit of their Parthian foe, how they stood most in danger, not in the glow and excitement of triumph, but in following up the victory! The Parthian bowmen on swift horses, ever and anon wheeled round in their retreat, and emptied their quivers on the pursuing enemy, strewing the march of the conquerors, even more than the battlefield, with their slain. "When thou thinkest thou standest," is the farewell monitory word which may well be heard in the name of the Great Master of the Feast—"take heed lest thou fall." "Beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace."

"The holy rite is o'er : the blessed sign

Is given to cheer us in this earthly strife :
The Bread is broken, and outpoured the Wine,
Symbols of better life.

Touch Thou our wayward hearts, and let them be
In stronger faith to Thy glad service given :
Till in the city of the crystal sea
We sing the Song of Heaven."

V.

"It is finished!" (John xix. 30). I have listened to-day in thought, at the Holy Table of Communion, to this victorious cry. Glorious is the fulfilment of the prophetic words—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." A FINISHED work: and so finished and completed, that, in the retrospect, the divine-human lips could say with complacency, yea proclaim with unhesitating triumph, "I am satisfied!" *Satisfied!*—It was the very dignity and divinity of the august Speaker, which gave such singular meaning and emphasis to the assertion. The higher our aim, the more refined and elevated our views and attainments,—the less are we satisfied with our own ideals. A little thing will satisfy a little mind. It requires a great thing to satisfy a great mind. The child is satisfied with a toy or bauble; the savage with the trinket,—the gaudy bead, or piece of painted glass: while the civilised and educated are, in very proportion to their culture, fastidious;—swift to detect the literary blemish, or the faulty note in music; or the crude touch of colour on the picture,—the flaw in the otherwise breathing marble. What pleases the unlettered villager will look poor in the eyes of the man of science. And so, the higher we ascend in the ranks of being. What must it require to satisfy the mind of an angel: what must it be to satisfy the mind of *God*? Him whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom:—whose glory is set above the heavens: whose power is boundless, His wisdom infinite; His life-time eternity! Oh,

what a work that must be, over which this all-wise and all-perfect *Deity*, in contemplating it, can say—‘It is enough; I have reached my own divine Ideal. I am *satisfied*.’ “Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do!” In that moment of all moments, when His eyes were about to close in the sleep of death,—a gleam of radiance breaks from His eclipsed soul. He could wish no more: the world’s battle is won. With the smile of ineffable love and satisfaction on His lips, He cried, and cried “*with a loud voice*,” as if He would wake the echo of all the ages, in order to proclaim the completion and the completeness of His victory—IT IS FINISHED!

“Satisfied”—“Finished”:—blessed pillow for me to repose on in the retrospect of to-day! He has *done* all, and *suffered* all, and *procured* all for me. I see every attribute of the divine nature magnified. Justice exulting in the sublime vindication. Truth hastening to meet Mercy and Mercy meeting Righteousness. Let the rich man glory in his riches: let the strong man glory in his strength: let the wise man glory in his wisdom: but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

One other thought occurs in my contemplation of that mystery of darkness;—that superhuman soul-struggle; ending though it did in so triumphant a victory. Yet vain, surely, is the question that has been asked, ‘Could not less have satisfied? Could not anguish less awful in its accompaniments have sufficed? Could none of the ignominy and agony of that bitter path and that bitter cross have been dispensed with?’ The analogy of nature would seem to tell that there is no

useless nor redundant expenditure of agency even in the smallest of the works of God. If it be so with the lowlier divine operations, much more may we conclude that there will be no superfluous or unnecessary agency demanded in 'the work of works,'—the work of Redemption. From the first pang of Bethlehem's Babe in the cradle, till the Great Surety trampled Satan under His bleeding feet on Calvary, all was necessary. There was not the redundant leaf in that chaplet of sorrow which the Man of Sorrows wore.

I have been testifying to-day, through these significant memorials, to the sufferings of Christ; let me connect them with the glory which is to follow: anticipating that everlasting communion Sabbath, when the sufferings and the glory shall be sung in one blended strain by the ransomed. I have heard the sound of the Bridegroom's feet to-day; I have listened to His festal summons to the Feast on earth; let me be so living, and walking, and watching, and working, that the great final cry and summons to the Festal Hall of heaven may be met with the glad response,—
"Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him!"

VI.

"Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render praises unto Thee: for Thou hast delivered my soul from death" (Ps. lvi. 12, 13). This musing of the Psalmist is surely most befitting and appropriate for me on a retrospect of to-day's approach to the Holy Table. But he does not stop with this treble assertion. He

adds a fervid appeal, a votive prayer—if I may so call it—to the God he has covenanted to serve. May I not endorse it also as my own earnest pleading in this votive hour—“*Wilt Thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?*” (Ps. lvi. 13).

Let me note that it is when under the deepest and most solemn consciousness of his covenant engagement—“Thy vows are upon me, O God”—he anticipates the possibility of his feet stumbling. In the hour of elation and victory he contemplates the certainty of fresh encounters with spiritual foes. The past deliverance and the present vow are no guarantees against the seductive wiles of temptation. At the very moment when he has that votive resolution on his lips, and the hymn of praise on his tongue;—when his bark is on placid waters and no cloud disturbs his sky, he dreads and forecasts the storm. He would be forearmed as well as forewarned; and looking to the God who had put his vow on record, he cries—‘Lord! in this very hour of my strength, I feel the reality of my weakness! Thou hast delivered my soul from death: (*that is my present rapturous theme*). But *the future*—that unknown and often treacherous deceitful future!—wilt Thou not—who hast promised “as thy days, so shall thy strength be”—wilt Thou not help me in *it*?’ “Wilt THOU not deliver my feet from falling?” Communion and Sacraments cannot keep me. The most sacred vows may be broken like gossamer webs. But hold *Thou* me up and I shall be safe. With Thy voice behind me saying, ‘This is the way,’ I may, in the expressive words

of Israel's singer—"walk before God in the light of the living!"

And what is this, but the lesson and resolution of '*new obedience*'? What a befitting season, by God's grace, to adopt fresh resolves, and to aspire after a higher standard of life and duty! Not to mystify so solemn a subject with figure: If, in looking back on past months, or past years, I am conscious of the dominating influence of some evil temper, some ungodly passion,—some flaw in Christian consistency,—some neglect or omission of well-known duty, either regarding myself or with respect to others,—what an appropriate season is this to initiate and inaugurate a new and better life:—to turn over, as the common saying is, a new leaf;—to make this renewed votive service to-day, a fresh starting-point for eternity:—as expressed in the words just quoted—"I will walk before God!" What a sure preservative against sin, to walk with the consciousness of His pure eye upon me! Seeking to go only where He leads:—to love only what He loves: His paths my paths:—my longing aspiration and aim the coincidence of my will with His! *This is obedience.* No "snare for the falling feet" successful then. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird" (Prov. i. 17). Rising on the wings of faith, and prayer, and love, and new obedience,—these wings bathed in the light of God and heaven,—they will be kept from being soiled by the degrading contacts of earth:—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

PRAYER AFTER THE HOLY COMMUNION.

O Lord, I beseech Thee to follow with Thy rich and effectual blessing, the solemn service of this day. May Jehovah hear me in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend me; send me help from the Sanctuary, and strengthen me out of Zion: may the Lord fulfil all my petitions. I bless Thee for all that mine eyes have seen, and mine ears have heard, and my hands have handled, and my lips have tasted of the good Word of life. I bless Thee that I have been enabled, through significant symbol, to listen to the dying cry, 'It is finished: ' proclaiming the great redemption complete; Satan's power overthrown; the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers. I would set up anew my Ebenezer of gratitude and thankfulness—my stone of remembrance, and write upon it the inscription, "The Lord hath helped me!" What am I, that Thou shouldest bring me to Thine own banqueting-house; giving me angels' food, the Bread of life; and that mine should be the blessedness of those that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb? Wash me after supper. Were I to be tried by my best hours and services, how would I stand condemned. I bring the iniquity of my holy things to be sprinkled with the blood of Atonement. Lord Jesus, Thou great Intercessor within the veil, do Thou let down Thy censer filled with much incense, that therein I may place, along with Thy people, my polluted services and vows and covenantings; that

mingled though they be with much imperfection and sin, yet perfumed with Thine adorable merits, they may ascend with acceptance before the Throne.

Impress on me the solemn thought, "Thy vows are upon me, O God!" May I feel it to be in no empty or formal manner that I have anew consecrated myself—all I am and all I have—to Thee this day. Strengthen me with might by Thy Spirit in the inner man. Hold Thou me up, and then alone I shall be safe. May the needful warning voice follow me from the Holy Table into the duties and occupations and temptations of life, "When thou thinkest thou standest, take heed lest thou fall." Realising in the past my own weakness, may I lean more confidently on Thine Omnipotent arm, and trust more unswervingly Thine Omnipotent grace. While I have been led this day, through visible emblems, to look more especially to Jesus as my Surety-Saviour,—may I be enabled to look to Him also as my Great Example: to walk more closely in His holy footsteps, and to reflect more faithfully His holy image: seeking more fully to realise my covenant position and calling, as no longer my own, but bought with a price, and bound to glorify Him in my body and my spirit which are His. May His love be enthroned more as the ruling passion in my heart, and may His glory be more the great end of my being. May it be with joyful alacrity that I say, 'Blessed Saviour, where Thou goest I will go; where Thou dwellest I will dwell: Thy people shall be my people, and death itself shall not separate between Thee and me.' Thus may I go up, and on, through the wilderness, leaning on the arm of Him who is the Beloved of

my soul; and then, though an host should encamp against me, my heart need not fear. Thou who art with me, and for me, art greater far than all that can be against me.

I pray for my fellow-communicants. Bless the young:—those who have to-day made a first public surrender and consecration of themselves to Thee. May they have the ever-increasing conviction, that they have chosen a blessed service and a blessed Master: and be enabled to live under the sovereignty of that lofty motive, to walk and act, so as to please Thee. May their arms be made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob; and may their hearts be fixed, trusting in the Lord.

Bless Thine aged servants. If heart and flesh do faint and fail, may God be the strength of their heart and their portion for ever. May they know the truth of Thine own promise, ‘They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.’ And if opportunities are becoming fewer in the Church on earth, for their partaking in hallowed communion of the fruit of the Vine, may they rejoice that the day is approaching when they shall drink it new with their divine Master and Lord in the Father’s kingdom.

Lord, bless us all. Give us the benediction which maketh rich and which addeth no sorrow with it. Now, in descending the mount, may the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost attend me hence. May the pillar of Thy presence ever go before me. As communion season after communion season passes by, do Thou impart to me more and more the spirit of a pilgrim and a

stranger. May my eye be more upwards and my footsteps onwards: having the girded loins and the burning lamps and the ever-vigilant watchfulness, and being like those who are waiting for the coming of their Lord. And so, when all sacramental times, and sanctuaries, and means of grace are ended, may it be mine to have the promised abundant entrance ministered into the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven.

Now unto Him who alone is able to keep me from falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Gloria in Excelsis.

[There is a tradition, though not a reliable one, that this ancient Hymn was used at the Eucharist as early as the second century. Its antiquity, at all events, is unquestionable; and for many centuries it was employed in "The Sacramentary," both in the Latin and Greek Churches, and called HYMNUS ANGELORUM (the Hymn of Angels). It still forms the familiar closing ascription of praise in the Communion Service of the Church of England. This "Angelic Canticle," with its venerable associations, may have an appropriate place in this closing page.]

Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace, goodwill toward men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

PART III.

HISTORICAL APPENDIX.

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THE fundamental doctrines of the Christian system ; the doctrines of Paul and Luther, the doctrines of the Reformation, and which have been held by our best divines—we have always maintained to be unchangeable, incapable of being shifted and accommodated to what is called the spirit of the age ;—on the other hand, that the mere outer forms of Church Service are flexible, and may undergo modification or expansion so as to bring them more in harmony, not so much with the times, as with ancient and recognised usages. The jewel cannot (dare not) be cut or altered—the casket may be so without damage ; it may even be with advantage. Justification by faith :—the vicarious sufferings and atonement of our divine Redeemer :—regeneration by the Spirit of God :—the inspiration of Holy Scripture and the supernatural element in that Revelation : the Holy Communion as a sign and memorial—never in the Popish and semi-Popish view of it, as a sacrifice for sin—these and other cognate truths are immutable as the stars of heaven. But the modes and methods in the celebration of worship are matters to be adjusted by Christian opinion : not stereotyped *dogmas* of the faith, they may be regulated and altered by the dictates of a wise Christian expediency ! *

* A portion of this Appendix contains what was spoken on the Sunday previous to an additional dispensation of the Sacrament.

Such variations and deviations have perhaps been in nothing more remarkably illustrated than in the case of the solemn Ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The Ordinance itself we cannot too carefully guard and conserve; but from the date of its Institution downwards, there have been continual, and in many cases notable departures in the external form, including that of more frequent or less frequent celebration.

It may not be out of place to observe, that we have the same wide departure singularly illustrated in the case of the analogous typical rite of the Passover: in the outward observance of which our Blessed Lord (with reverence we say it,) sanctioned by His own Example several such alterations and modifications. The Passover which He and His disciples kept in the upper room * differed in these respects very materially from the letter of the original. *That*, it will be remembered, as described in previous pages, was to be eaten standing, "with the loins girded, the staff in the hand, and the shoes on the feet;" while, in the terminating era of the Jewish dispensation, the recipients,—a custom borrowed from the Romans—reclined on couches,† and the following observances, unknown at its earliest appointment, amounting almost to a new ritual, were introduced.

The Head of the family, or of a cluster of families, mingled for himself and his guests a cup (more accurately a bowl) of wine with water; which was drunk four times in the course of the evening, accompanied with the thanks-

* Though it be of no importance for our present purpose, let it be again noted that we assume, for reasons elsewhere stated, it was the actual Passover they celebrated, and not, as some suppose, an anticipatory private meal.

† "They reclined on pillows around a low table, each resting on his left hand, so as to leave the right free, . . . the feet stretching back toward the ground, and each guest occupying a separate divan or pillow."—Dr. Edersheim's *Life and Times of Messiah*, vol. ii. p. 492-3.

giving—"Blessed be Thou for this good day and for this Holy Convocation, which Thou hast given us for joy and rejoicing: Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast sanctified Israel and the times." Then followed the washing of hands. The whole roasted Lamb was placed on the Table, with cakes of unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and "the dish" called "the *charoseth*," compounded of various fruits mixed with vinegar. After supper followed the Discourse, or Liturgy (called "Haggadah") delivered by the presiding member. Its theme, as spoken of in a preceding portion of this Volume, was the Exodus; rehearsing that grand story of olden miracle and power. Among other utterances were these—"We are bound to give thanks: to praise, to laud, to extol,—to honour, to magnify Him that hath done for our fathers and for us all these wonders:—who hath brought us from bondage to freedom—from mourning to a good day: therefore must we say before Him, Halleluia—Praise the Lord!" Over a second cup of mingled wine they sung the cxiii. and cxiv. Psalms, with a renewed invocation of thanks and thanksgiving. Then came the breaking of the thin round unleavened cake or biscuit, and the distribution among the guests, dipping it into the dish of *charoseth*, accompanied with the usual formula—"This is the bread of affliction which your fathers did eat in the land of Egypt." A third cup of wine followed,—with the blessing after meat,—"the cup of blessing" which St. Paul refers to. Then, yet again, the final cup—the cup of the Hallel;—at which they stood and sang together what was called their great Hallel (Ps. cxv. to cxviii. inclusive), and with this the sacred rite terminated.

I have gleaned, from reliable sources, these details, in order that it may at once be seen, by comparing the words of the original Institution, so circumstantially given in Exodus, how complete was the departure of the Jews, at the

close of the old Testament dispensation and the commencement of the Christian era, from the details there specified. There was the sitting or reclining at table; the use of the wine;—the *charoseth*—the reiterated thanksgivings,—the employment of special Psalms—the lustrations,—all of which are unmentioned in the Pentateuch, and have no claim, in the strict sense of the term, for divine authority. Yet, these changes, we repeat, had the highest of all sanction in the example and following of the Redeemer Himself. Whatever departure there might be, however, from ‘the rubric,’ the great truth they adumbrated was the same. The deliverance of their forefathers from the Land of Egypt was the type of a greater and mightier deliverance, which He, the true Paschal Lamb “sacrificed for us” was to effect; and whose Redemption was henceforth, by a new and expressive sacramental rite, to be kept before the eye of His Church until the end of time.

If we look now to THE LORD’S SUPPER, and compare its modern celebration with that of the Apostolic Church, we shall find, in many unimportant matters, similar divergencies. I pass over the mere attitude of reclining, instead of sitting or kneeling.* But look at some of the references, more to

* Speaking of the sitting posture, Dean Stanley (whose historical accuracy on this subject is undeniable) speaks of it as the attitude “which preserves the tradition of the primitive posture of the early Christians, who partook of the Holy Supper in the usual attitude of guests at a meal, recumbent, or sitting, as the case might be.”—*Christian Institutions*, page 202. I cannot omit, however, a more specific reference to yet another posture assumed in the early centuries, which seems, at first, a singular and almost violent alteration from Apostolic custom. But, in accordance with the testimony of the most reliable ancient writers, there is no doubt that on the Lord’s Day, the Sacred Rite was partaken of, neither sitting nor kneeling, but *standing*. What seems thus strange, and almost irreverent, has nevertheless its own

our present purpose, as to the times and occasions of dispensing the rite (though these may be rather in the shape of inference than of positive statement), contained in the Acts of the Apostles, the Inspired Epistles, and the works of early Christian writers.

It is evident (those would be unreasonable to gainsay it) that we make a step in advance and bring ourselves more in accordance with the Apostolic use and wont by advocating more *frequent* communions. We only state an undoubted fact, that believers of the first century were in the habit of partaking of the Lord's Supper, at all events, weekly; as we see was the case with the Christians at Troas (Acts xx.), and indeed, previous to that occasion, the observance, immediately following the Pentecostal effusion, seems to have been a daily one. St. Luke, in describing the earliest phase of the Christian Church (Acts ii. 42), thus writes—"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread* and in prayers." And yet again, giving a picture of their church life, daily public devotion is coupled with daily private communion,—“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and *breaking bread* from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people” (Acts ii. 46, 47).* This, while it describes probably in the first instance no more than the daily common meals of the Christian brotherhood—(the *Agape* or Love feast, still retained in the Moravian and some other churches), such a

natural explanation. It is the same which our Presbyterian Church of Scotland had, and has, in the vast majority of her churches, for the standing attitude in prayer, *viz.*, that while kneeling is most seemly and befitting on ordinary days;—*standing*, as the recognised posture of joy or triumph, was most in accordance alike with the jubilant day of the Resurrection, and the *Eucharist* or “Thanksgiving Feast.”

* See Dean Plumptre's Art., “Lord's Supper,” in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

meeting began soon to be either preceded or followed by the celebration of the Sacred Memorial of their Lord's death and love. Hence we may note, in Paul's Epistles, the distinction between the ordinary cups used by the guests during the common meal, and the special cup in which the memorial wine was placed. This latter he calls (1 Cor. x. 16) "The Cup of blessing:" and yet more definitely (1 Cor. x. 21), "The Cup of *the Lord*." The table, too, on which these cups were placed was "The Lord's Table." Again, while rebuking the Corinthians for their fearful and shameful desecration of these Love feasts, he refers to the practice in connection with them, of receiving "*The Lord's Supper*." He evidently also intimates that though no longer were the *daily* meetings continued, the two Feasts, the secular and the sacred, were still combined; for he proceeds to give explicit directions as to how they might be co-ordinately kept, without any possible risk of indulgence and excess: (v. 33, 34), "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat," (and that was probably now confined to the first day of the week) "tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home,—that ye come not together unto condemnation." *

* At these primitive communions, the brotherhood and sisterhood were in the habit of bringing their contributions "in a basket" to the common meal. A still more interesting accompaniment was the use of *fish*. At the Agapæ, or Suppers, preceding the dispensation of the Eucharist, fish was undoubtedly included. There is a catacomb painting mentioned by Dr. Mommsen, with bread and fish, in the ancient crypt of Domitilla. "The bread and fish occur again repeatedly in the Callixtine Catacomb, with a man in the act of blessing the bread. Seven, eight, or more baskets of bread are placed near a table where seven persons are sitting. The table is round, and the fishes are also placed upon it. . . . A connection must always have existed in the Christian mind between the last Supper at Jerusalem—the bread and wine,—and the last repast of the Lord with His disciples, the bread and fish

After the first century, the Agape, in connection with the Lord's Supper, gradually dies away, until, indeed, owing to the abuses to which it was liable, it comes to be positively forbidden by the Councils of the Church.* And the last alteration of all is the substitution of the Morning as the *time* of celebration, rather than the Evening.

From these, then, and other peculiarities,† (such as preceding the act in the first centuries by ablutions, the mixing the wine with water, the men and women sitting apart, &c.)‡ it will be observed, how, as regards mere outward form—the time, and place, and manner of receiving,—there have been manifold changes and departures from the original wont. There is no doubt the words of Institution, “as oft as ye eat this bread,” point (in contradistinction to baptism) to a repeated, if not frequent celebration. The early Christians felt that the death of their Lord was the great central doctrine of their faith, and that each time they assembled for public worship—as on that same Lord's day at Troas,—it became them to recall this amazing thought; and that they could in no way do it so significantly as in His own appointed rite. §

by the sea of Galilee (John xxi.).”—*Tyrwhit* in Smith's Dict. : *Art. Eucharist*, with woodcuts; “*The Catacombs of Rome*” (Nelson & Sons), p. 75–80, with woodcuts. See also *Dean Stanley's Christian Institutions*, p. 50–1. “The fishes are sometimes placed on the cakes of bread, sometimes on a platter by themselves.”

* The only exception seems to have been Maundy Thursday, the anniversary of its Institution, the evening before the Crucifixion, when the Eucharist was celebrated throughout the entire Church after partaking of a meal.

† See a fuller reference in the next note.

‡ See note at end.

§ “The Bithynian Christians met on ‘a fixed day’ for worship and communion (according to Pliny). The expression ‘*stato die*’ shows plainly that communion at that time was not daily. Justin Martyr

We have dwelt on all this, simply in illustration of our opening statement, that much of the mere *outward* in a church may be left to be regulated by the prudence of Christian Societies. Many of these differences are in themselves insignificant; for "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." * To use the words of Augustine, although it must be conceded he himself deviated from the simplicity of the Ordinance,—“The Lord did not prescribe in what order it

distinctly mentions Sunday as the day of Christian communion—‘the day on which God made the light, and on which Christ rose from the dead.’”—See *Professor Cheetham*, Art. Bib. Dic. *with authorities*. The *daily* celebration of the rite, however, became again universal at the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. This is attested by Chrysostom and Jerome; also from an injunction of one of the canons in the Spanish Council of Toledo (A.D. 398). The main reason, moreover, being then at an end for Christians meeting as the upholders of an “illicit religion,” in secret and by stealth, at the hour when least attention was attracted to them (“convocationes nocturnæ”), the usual and appointed time became “the third hour of the day” (nine o’clock), the same in which the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles. The only exception to the morning dispensation seems to have been on Christmas Eve (the night of the Nativity); Maundy Thursday, as already stated; also on Easter Eve. The faithful, on the latter occasion, were in the habit of remaining in church throughout Saturday, communicating at midnight. The Romish Church, with its invariable fascinating power of appealing to what may be called the romantic side of human nature, subsequently enjoined that on that same occasion, in monasteries, so soon as a star was seen in the sky, the bells were to be rung, a litany chanted, and “mass” celebrated.—See *Ib.*, *passim*. With regard to the *time* of celebration, we cannot resist adding, what may seem somewhat remarkable in regard to Presbyterian Scotland in a later age, that the Communion, according to Protestant rite, was first administered in St. Giles’ Cathedral, Edinburgh, *in the morning with candle light*.—*Life and Work*, 1882, p. 11.

* See some excellent remarks in Principal Hill’s Lectures on Divinity, *in loc*.

should be received." The Christian man or Christian woman who obeys the sacred injunction only once a year, if they come with pure faith and heart consecration, may be truer communicants and more really acceptable in the sight of the Great Master, than those, whose frequent repetitions can never atone for formalism of heart, lack of faith and love, or purity of life. It is not times, nor seasons, nor numerous approaches—that weigh with Him who says—"My son, my daughter, give Me thine heart."

But while all this is true with reference to the externals and accompaniments of the Ordinance, it is very different regarding the object and design, the nature and significance, of the Sacred Rite itself. While churches may differ regarding the one, and still be faithful to the truth despite of such diversities, there may be, and there is, perilous error regarding the other. Were it not for the pretensions of the Church of Rome in these days, and her undoubted proselytising success within the British realms, more than once referred to; also, for the close assimilation in a large section of the Church of England to Romish tenets regarding the Communion, it would hardly be worth while alluding to the preposterous doctrine of Transubstantiation which now and for ages has been grafted on the simple ordinance.

What, then, is this doctrine of the Romish Church succinctly stated; and its equally dangerous modifications by others? Or, in case of these latter repudiating the charge by a mystification of words, let us give, in brief, the Roman Catholic theory or dogma.

The formula of Institution, "This is my body, this is my blood," is taken by them in a *literal* sense; also when St. Paul speaks of "the Cup of blessing," as the "Communion of the blood of Christ." In other words, that when Jesus, at the first celebration, or when the so-called priest, in His stead, utters these expressions, the common elements of bread

and wine are actually changed, or transmuted, or "transubstantiated" into the veritable flesh and blood of Christ. It is believed that the elements are not changed, as they express it, "in their sensible properties: in figure, taste, weight, or other accidents," but that the substance of them is completely altered, and the substance of the body and blood of the Redeemer is truly present; the Communicant eating His flesh and drinking His blood: * that the priest, moreover, thereby offers a real sacrifice to God ("the unbloody Sacrifice," as it is called, "of the Mass"), but which they consider a true propitiatory offering for the sins of the dead and of the living. The doctrine seems to have been first propounded in the ninth century, by Paschasius Radbertus—abbot of Corvei. It was vehemently opposed by a learned brother monk, and other distinguished men of the period. But superstition and credulity, aided by the selfish arts of an interested priesthood, who too readily recognised in the magical and supernatural dogma a fulcrum to raise their own position and enhance their spiritual influence, ultimately prevailed. After a struggle of a century and a half, the now

* It is well known that there has been a great amount of light thrown, in recent years, on the old mythology and religious rites of the Egyptians. Among these, not the least remarkable are the foreshadowings of "a more sure word of prophecy;" notably, dim gropings after the doctrine of the Trinity, and a belief in the Second divine Person of this Trinity. Osiris Horus, according to Philo, was known and worshipped in the land of the Pharaohs as "the Mediator;" "The Word;" "The Son of the Father;" "The only Begotten Son," &c. But what claims a passing reference here is, that the modern dogma of Transubstantiation had its place and pedigree in these old Egyptian Mysteries, and is a development of them. The divine Incarnated Osiris Horus, who died, and rose again the third day to a new life, had a sacred cake eaten in his memory; which cake "was supposed to pass into new qualities after receiving the priestly blessing of the Head of the Egyptian Church."—See Mr. Crowther's "*Starry Cross*," p. 32-37.

accepted doctrine was approved officially by the Council of Rome in 1079, and rendered still more binding and obligatory by two subsequent Councils in the Papal City; specially that held by Pope Innocent III., the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215.)* In this grievous departure from the simplicity of the Gospel, what appears saddest, and most reprehensible of all (or at least more pernicious to the receiver than all), is, that the partaking of that bread and wine (what is known as the *opus operatum*)—the mere mechanical act of receiving these elements—independently altogether of the disposition of the recipient, has an intrinsic virtue to impart pardon, and procure salvation. Hence the avidity of members of that Church, whatever may have been their previous transgressions, to receive the last sacrament on their death-beds; passing into eternity with a lie in their right hands. For what is the impression—the delusion—sanctioned by their ‘Spiritual Advisers,’ but that a mere outward deed and observance has obliterated the sins of a lifetime, and opened to them, as to others, the gate of Heaven.†

* See *Chambers's Encyclopedia*, Art. “Lord’s Supper.” We may as well give in full the very words of the accepted faith of the Roman Church, as contained in the authoritative Creed of Pope Pius V. (A.D. 1568). Each member subscribes the following article of belief:—“I profess . . . that in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially the Body and Blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the Bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the Wine into the Blood; which conversion the Catholic Church calleth Transubstantiation.”

† It is the frequent and sinful abuse of these holy elements at the last hour, which led Presbyterians to withhold the *private* dispensation of the Lord’s Supper: one of those extreme puritan safeguards, the necessity of which cannot be denied; but whose application in all cases cannot assuredly be vindicated. I believe I am only endorsing the experience of not a few ministers, that they would feel a hallowed

A dogma so revolting to reason and common sense, so unsupported by Scripture, so utterly removed from the Divine simplicity of the original Institution; we may well add, so potent an auxiliary to Infidelity,—is unworthy of discussion or refutation. Nevertheless, the credulity of the nineteenth century has been found equal to its acceptance, as the doctrine is now firmly received by Romanists;—alas! also, openly and avowedly preached and proclaimed within the limits of the Anglican Church; where, in many places, the frequency of so-called “Celebrations,” with their bowings, and genuflexions: the unscriptural exaltation of sacramental efficacy, and superstitious veneration of the elements, form little else than a travesty of the Divine original.

What then, if such be the abuse of this Sacred rite, do we deem its real signification and intention? and how do we explain the phrase on which the Roman Catholic has grafted his untenable interpretation, “This is my body:—This is my blood”?

We reply, that Jesus here employs a *figure*, such as is used often in ordinary parlance: by which the sign is put for the thing signified; similar, as has frequently been noted, to the phrase, “and they drank of that Rock which followed them;” which we never think of interpreting literally. An illustration more to the point may be taken from the words used regarding the Passover, and the slaying of the Lamb set apart by every Israelitish family,—“*It is the Lord's Passover.*” Evidently, not that it was the Lord's actual “passing over from house to house,” but the token and memorial of that action. Or again, when our Blessed Redeemer says in that particular verse, which Romanists

gratification in having a discretionary power at many a sick-bed and death-bed to relax the prohibition.

have specially appropriated, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," He never means that the *cup* is the covenant, but only the *pledge* or *sign*, or *seal*, of that covenant. So, therefore, when He makes the averment, now in question, "This is my body," He undoubtedly means this is the *sign* of my body; this is the *sign* of my blood.

In a word, the Lord's Supper is a blessed commemorative Ordinance, designed to call into vivid remembrance, by the significant symbols of Christ's appointment, His own dying love. When partaken of with a lively faith, the Great Master is really and spiritually present. "The body of Christ"—are the words of Article xxviii. of the Church of England—"is given, taken and eaten in the Supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner: and the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is faith." . . . "Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) . . . is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture: overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." Art. xxxi. : "The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual: and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." In the most solemn and impressive part of the same Sacramentary Service, when the Communicants are about to partake of the Sacred Elements—the well-known words of the officiating minister are these:—"The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart, by faith with thanksgiving."

And again, in giving the cup, "The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful." We have already, in a previous part of this Volume, given the testimony to the Bible doctrine as stated in the General Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Here is the same in an amplified form—and repeating some of the very phrases just quoted, from the Westminster Confession: "That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called Transubstantiation) by consecration of a Priest or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason, overthroweth the nature of Sacrament, and hath been and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea of gross idolatries. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this Sacrament, do then, also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally or corporeally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of His death. . . . The Popish Sacrifice of the Mass, as they call it, is most abominably injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect."

These strange and unaccountable misapprehensions and perversions of simple truth—irrational and preposterous materialistic theories, should be at once dismissed, by the acceptance of the obvious explanation, that our Blessed Lord, in the language used, accommodated Himself to the wont and habit of His hearers ; employing parable—physical images, to inculcate and enforce spiritual realities. Farther, we are constrained to add, that if anything in connection with the subject is more unwarrantable than another, it is surely the wresting of other words of Scripture from their fair and legitimate meaning, and utilising them to bolster up

a favourite but indefensible dogma. What can be more glaring than the constant support which the "Sacramentarian party" claim from the well-known passage (John vi. 53), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you"? This is an utterance which, it is notorious, was made by our Blessed Redeemer a whole year antecedent to the Institution of the Supper (in one of His discourses in Northern Capernaum); and which could not, except by an utterly strained interpretation, have any connection with that Farewell Feast.*

* The writer was gifted, some years ago, by a clergyman in the Church of England, who claims his respect, with a printed Sermon on this Holy Sacrament, advocating the "extreme views." On opening it, the usual misapplied verse was there as his text: words in which (the repetition may be forgiven) our Adorable Saviour (if we can be warranted for a moment employing human language), Himself an Oriental, addressing Orientals, employed expressions ambiguous to us, but which would present no such ambiguity to the hearers of that age and country—inculcating, through a material image and symbolism, the necessity of spiritually feeding on Him, imbibing His doctrine and spirit,—just as the food we are in the habit of taking assimilates with our material bodies for our daily sustenance. Besides, the reference in the passage is an entirely local and specific one. It was suggested, as He Himself tells us, by the poor carnal motives which induced some of the multitude who had been miraculously fed on five barley loaves the day before at Bethsaida-Julias, to follow Him to His own city, expecting a repetition of this Bread Feast. "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles; but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John vi. 26, 27). Then follow the words to which we are referring, which are simply an expansion of this same thought in the sequel of the same discourse:—a discourse, in the close of which it is further noteworthy, that the Blessed Master seems careful to guard against any possible distortion of His metaphor, or misinterpretation of its meaning. "It is the spirit that quickeneth;

Unless accepting the purely metaphorical rendering thus claimed, I would renew the query, what can the literalist interpreters of "This is my body" (to be consistent with themselves) make of the statement regarding the Ordinance in St. Paul's rehearsal of the words of Institution, "*This cup is the new Covenant*"? How could a cup be so, except figuratively? But to hold to the one case literally, they must do so in the other.*

the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63).

* It may not be out of place to give a few testimonies from the Reformers and old English Divines whose names and authority are most revered among us.

"With such Sacraments," says Miles Coverdale, "through outward visible forms, for our infirmities' sake, pleased it the Lord, to show and set before our eyes His heavenly and invisible grace."

Bishop Jewel, the learned prelate of his age, thus discourses in his well-known "Challenge"—"This," saith Paul, 'I received of the Lord, and the same I gave over unto you.' But if he saw the disorder that we have seen, would he not be moved as much against us now as he was sometime against the Corinthians? Would he not pull us back to the Institution of Christ, as he did them? Would he not say to us, . . . Did I ever teach you to offer up the Son of God unto His Father? Did I ever teach you any other propitiatory offering for sin than that Christ once offered on the Cross? Did I ever teach you to lift the Sacrament over your head? . . . Is this it, that Paul received of the Lord? Let us say but thus to ourselves, and no doubt God of His mercy will open our hearts: we shall see our errors and content ourselves to be ordered by the wisdom of God. . . . So shall we have comfort of the Holy Mysteries." Yet again, "That was not Christ's meaning, that the wheaten bread should lay aside its own nature and receive a certain divinity. . . . By them (the Elements), Christ Himself being the true Bread of eternal life, is so presently given to us, that by faith we verily receive His Body and Blood. . . . Being spiritually understood, it will give you life."

"If the Bread were turned into Christ," says Archbishop Usher, "there would then be two Christs—one that giveth and another that is given."

On the words "Ye shall show forth the Lord's death *till He come*,"

John Bradford quaintly but pungently remarks—"Till He come,"—whereby He doth us to wit, that corporeally He is not there in the form of the bread."

"The change," says Jeremy Taylor, "is not natural and proper, but figurative, sacramental, and spiritual."

"What have we to do," said Latimer, "but to feast in the Lord? Christ spake never a word of sacrificing, therefore sacrificing priests should now cease for ever."

"That Christ's body," says Zwingle, "in its essence or really, is either present in the Supper, or by our mouth and teeth is eaten, we not only deny, but constantly affirm it to be an error opposed to the Word of God."

"We must," says Calvin, "take away every fancy of a local presence. Christ, as far as He is man, is nowhere else than in heaven." [See specially Dr. Hebert's "*The Lord's Supper*," passim. A volume of patient research and scholarship recording the opinions of leading Christian teachers from the earliest ages of the Church, on to the present century, on the subject of the Holy Communion.]

The concluding portion of this note the Writer deems may be of interest in its references to *the mode and method of celebration in the early and middle ages*. Much of it is taken from various valuable treatises and articles, which are not likely to be accessible to the general reader.

The fullest of all the inspired authoritative statements regarding the Lord's Supper, is the one already more than once commented on, given by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Church of Corinth, written from Ephesus (1 Cor. xi. 23-28)—a letter to which we may assign an approximate date from the year 53 to 57; and therefore a little more than twenty years after the original Institution of the Ordinance. It would appear, from references in the context of the same chapter, that at the "Agape" the guests, both wealthier and poorer members of the Christian society, were in the habit of contributing each a share of the provisions,—“a form of entertainment of frequent occurrence among the Greeks, and known by the name of *ἑσπας*.” (Howson and Conybeare's *St. Paul*, vol. ii. p. 49.) The late Dean Stanley, in one of his graphic and realistic pictures, thus describes such a Corinthian Communion as that to which St. Paul adverts: “We see the banquet spread in the late evening, after the sun had set behind the western ridge of the hills of Achaia. We see the many torches blazing, as at Troas, to light up the darkness of the upper room, where, as was their wont, the Christian community assembled. We see the couches laid

and the walls hung after the manner of the East as on the night of the Betrayal. We see the sacred loaf, representing in its compact unity, the harmony of the whole Society. We hear the blessing or thanksgiving on the cup, responded to by the joint 'Amen,' such as even three centuries later is described as 'like a peal of thunder.' We witness the complete realisation in outward form of the Apostle's words, suggested, doubtless, by the sight of the meal and the Sacrament thus blended together,—"*whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, vol. i. 248).

In the Roman Catacombs there are a few interesting memories of the rite, associated with the primitive ages of Christianity. In some of the arched tombs in the wall recesses, the flat lid of the tombs seems to have served as a Communion Table. (See Scott's History of the Fine Arts.) Justin Martyr, the great Christian philosopher of the second century, mentions that in the administration of the Communion at his time, the presiding minister, with the bread, and a cup of wine mixed with water before him (this mixture continued for the first seven centuries), offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit,—"*the Lord's prayer*" forming an invariable portion; at the close of which there was the responsive *Amen* just referred to, from the people present. The deacons received the consecrated elements from the hands of the "*Celebrant*," distributing them among those that were present. This, however, applies more to the Wine than the Bread. After the public administration, a farther duty was to take the remainder of the sacred elements into the Sacristy. "*The meal*," adds the same Father of the Church, "*is called by us Eucharistia*." He undoubtedly, however, connects with the Eucharist the idea of sacrifice; so soon was there to be a divergence from the apostolic simplicity of the rite,—a divergence from his day, perpetuated for centuries. Cyprian, a father of the African Church of the third century, after similar statements, mentions that the bread was received by the communicants in the right hand; as Cyril of Jerusalem afterwards expressed it, "*making the left hand a throne for the right, and hollowing the palm*." Some of the sacred elements were carried home in caskets. These caskets were called *Arca*, or *Arcula*, and have been supposed to contain portions of the Eucharist reserved for the sick.

As one among many illustrations of the superstitious veneration accorded to the elements, it is stated by an interesting writer, that St. Basil, while engaged in the act of celebrating the Holy Communion,

had a vision presented to him. The vision led him to separate the sacred bread (or wafer) into three portions. Of one of these he himself reverently partook. He gave instructions that the second portion was to be buried with him. The third he had enclosed in the body of a golden dove suspended over the altar.

In the Second Book of the 'Apostolic Constitutions,' the women were directed to draw near veiled; and during the dispensation of the rite the doors were to be guarded, the deacons calling out, "The doors! the doors!" lest any unbelieving or uninstructed person might enter. Before the end of the sixth century the females were farther compelled to receive the Eucharist in a napkin. The Antiphon seems very generally to have been sung immediately before partaking—"O taste and see how gracious the Lord is." In the Byzantine Liturgy (Chrysostom's), among other peculiarities in celebrating the Ordinance, is the remarkable one of pouring some drops of boiling water into the chalice. Then the holy bread (as is the custom in nearly all the Eastern churches to this day), being broken, or pounded down, or dipped into the wine, was administered by means of a spoon (*λαβίς*). To those unacquainted with the peculiarities and necessities of Oriental life, owing to the climate, a very singular custom must appear to be the use of the *flabellum* or feathered fan. All who have travelled in Eastern countries know how speedily anything odorous or edible is covered over with swarms of insects. The correspondent of the *Daily News*, detailing the interview between Admiral Hewett and the King of Abyssinia (May 26th, 1884), specially describes a royal servant standing at the right of the throne,—its pillows of violet satin, with the cross of Solomon worked in gold upon them, holding "a silver-handled horse-hair fly switch." This he continued swaying to and fro, to keep flies from the monarch's head, which was copiously covered with unguents. The same necessity of a light fan was deemed indispensable to keep the sacred elements intact. But a habit thus necessary in Eastern sanctuaries, was, in due time, without any reason, transferred to the West, where in the dispensation of the Eucharist it came, by use and wont, to take its place among the sacred customs, and to form a portion of the ceremonial. In the Liturgies of Chrysostom and Basil the deacons are enjoined to fan the holy elements during the prayer of consecration. Hence the presentation of the *flabellum* constitutes an integral part at the ordination of deacons. It is used still by the Armenians and Maronites. The *flabellum* seems to have ceased being employed in the Western Church by the fourteenth century. The only relic of it is the well-known sumptuous peacock's feathers, associated with the person and proces-

sion of the head of the Papacy, borne in the *sella gestatoria* at its greatest festivals. A friend and competent authority on these matters, however, informs me, that the fan made of feathers of the peacock cannot be assigned to an early age. [The reader is referred to an able article, *Holy Communion*, by Professor Cheetham in Smith's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities. Also to a description of the *Flabellum* by Canon Venables, *Ib.*]

I observe, singularly enough, incidentally noticed in a current letter in the *Times* (in connection with what is said above regarding the $\lambda\alpha\beta\iota\varsigma$), that, "in the communion plate belonging to St. Peter's, Cornhill, London, known to be at once the most valuable and curious in the country, is a spoon of pure gold, the bowl of which is drilled, and has many small holes; and is said to have been used by the officiating clergyman in times gone by, to remove flies or other insects which obtrude into the consecrated wine, during the administration of the communion."

Nothing, perhaps, so illustrates the diversity of custom in the use of the Sacrament, as the extraordinary practice, not of child—but of *infant* communion, in the early centuries. It seems strange that even Augustine deemed the reception of the sacred rite necessary for the salvation of infants. A writer on this subject (Rev. W. E. Scudamore) supplies the following statements:—"They are infants: but they are made partakers of His Table, that they may have life in themselves" (Aug. Serm. 174, § 7). "Let them be admitted," says Gennadius of Marseilles (A.D. 495), "to the mysteries of the Eucharist." In 585 the Council of Macon, in France, gave orders that on Wednesdays and Fridays "innocent children" should be brought to the church; and after fasting (!) receive the sacrament. So in the earliest *Ordo Romanus* (A.D. 730), 'Little ones' ('parvuli') baptized on Easter Eve, are "to take no food, nor be suckled after baptism, till they communicate of the Sacrament."

Nor was this singular custom peculiar to the earlier ages alone. I find in the biography of that devoted man Mr. Lowder of St. Peter's, London Docks, the following in a journal letter from Belgrade, describing the cathedral service:—"After the Liturgy, a good many communicated, even children. They came up to the gates of the Inconostasis—a large screen, highly ornamented—which divides the nave and choir from the Sanctuary, and received both species, standing, from a spoon which the priest put in their mouth, the deacon wiping their mouths afterwards with a napkin."—*Life*, p. 213.

Another custom, still more strange—need we say revolting—seems to have been common in the earlier centuries,—the administration of the

Holy Eucharist to the dead. The consecrated bread was laid on the breast of the corpse, and the wine was either placed within the silent lips, or the bread, dipped in the wine, was inserted in the mouth of the departed. Sometimes small phials, filled with wine, were deposited in the grave or loculi. The so-called glass "tear-bottles," seen by the writer in Rome and elsewhere, and which derive their name from the popular idea that they literally contained the tears of bereaved mourners, —were in most instances the sacred phials in which some portion of the Sacramental Wine was put after death, or at the time of the funeral obsequies. In the words of a writer already quoted, "as if every communicant had provided his own Chalice, and it had been buried with him as his most sacred possession" (Scott's History of the Fine Arts, p. 17). But the custom, in its more repulsive features, came in due time to be rigidly prohibited by Church Councils.

This reference further suggests that it was doubtless these high Sacramentarian views which led to special provision being made for the dispensation of the sacred elements in the case of lepers. We all know the horror entertained in the middle ages for this frightful malady, and its unhappy victims: how stern decrees of banishment and confiscation were pronounced against the sufferers by the secular arm: so that all possibility of contact might be prevented. It was under Gregory II. they seem first to have been made the recipients of the holiest Ordinance of the Church. In a letter to St. Boniface he gives ecclesiastical sanction to these otherwise miserable outcasts receiving communion. And this was revived, and more formally ratified in a canon of the Council of Worms more than a century later (868). Although in both cases it was accompanied with the rigid *proviso*, that the Holy Sacrament was to be partaken of by the lepers alone, and apart from others free of the scourge. [*Dupin*, and other authorities quoted in Art. 'Nineteenth Century,' September 1884, p. 468.]

Room must here be found for one other insertion regarding the administration of the Ordinance, though of an entirely different kind: but which we cannot help considering of singular contemporary interest. It will recall, in its outward features, the Passover celebration as described in the opening of this Appendix. Most of our readers are doubtless aware of a remarkable Christian movement at present going on among the Jews in South Russia. Among the new Articles of their faith, contained in what is called the "Haggadah of the Sons of the

New Covenant who believe in Jesus the Messiah," I find the following regarding 'The Lord's Supper as administered on Passover Eve':—
"The Lord's Supper is intended to convey, by the emblems of bread and wine, a solemn realisation of those blessings which are bestowed on us, the seed of Abraham, through the body and blood of the righteous Priest of the Most High, the King of Salem, Jesus our Messiah. In partaking of the sacrament we unite ourselves with Christ, who was sacrificed for our salvation, and are bound together in the bundle of life at the right hand of our Heavenly Father for ever." After the Lord's prayer has been said, a dish containing three fine passover cakes is placed on the table, and a flagon of wine, with a cup for each communicant. The Pastor fills the first cup, which is called, "THE CUP OF ABRAHAM, THE CHIEF OF THE PATRIARCHS," and says:—"This is the night of consecration unto the Lord, to be kept by all the children of Israel through this and succeeding generations." After a lengthened 'Antiphon,' or responsive sentences between Pastor and Congregation (which need not here be given), each takes a cup and says a blessing over it: and each tastes the wine. The cups are refilled, and a second cup is called, "THE CUP OF MOSES, THE CHIEF OF THE PROPHETS," followed by similar responsive utterances. After each again takes a cup and says a special blessing, the wine is tasted, and then a third cup is filled, which is called, "THE CUP OF DAVID, THE CHIEF OF THE KINGS," followed by appropriate antiphonal sentences between Pastor and worshippers. Each, in a similar way as before, tastes the wine, and the Pastor fills the fourth cup, which is called, "THE CUP OF SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST." The closing part of the Antiphon is this:—*Pastor*: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isaiah xxxiii. 17). *Congregation*: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep are gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah liii. 5, 6). The Pastor, standing at the table, puts the bread and wine in order, that he may readily and quickly hand to each one the bread, and then, each taking the cup says:—"I now take THE CUP OF SALVATION! Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of Israel, our Father for ever and ever, who hast kept and fulfilled Thy holy word given to our father Abraham, to Moses our prophet, to David the son of Jesse our king; and hast given us in Thy great mercy, Jesus our Messiah, the Saviour of the world from everlasting. Thou hast anointed Him to bring glad tidings to the afflicted,

to open the eyes of the blind, to proclaim liberty to the captives; to pour out His soul unto death, to bear the sins of many, to finish all evil, and to bring in for us eternal righteousness; and who has commanded us in His holy Gospel to commemorate His precious death till He come. May it please Thee, O heavenly Father, that we now, partaking of this bread and wine in remembrance of the suffering and death of Jesus our Messiah, may be cleansed and purified in body and soul; that we may be refreshed from Thy blessed fountain and be united with Christ in the bundle of life at Thy right hand for ever. May we and our children evermore dwell in Him, and He in us. Amen." The Pastor then takes the plate with the sacred elements, and distributes them, using the Saviour's own words of Institution, followed by those employed in the Anglican Service. The authority from which these details are taken adds—"This sacred and solemn service is closed and crowned with the Lord's prayer."—*Jewish Herald*, p. 1-3, *January 1885*.

I have spoken, now and in previous pages, of the diversity in the mode and manner of celebrating the Holy Communion. This is farther illustrated in another way, in the form and material of the Cups, or Chalices, containing the Sacramental Wine. Wooden cups seem to have been partially used in the Apostolic age. Glass cups have been found in the Catacombs, of the third and fourth centuries. Tertullian, A.D. 150-220, specially speaks of a chalice on which was carved the figure of the Good Shepherd. The earliest extant gold cup is of the sixth century, ornamented with precious stones. The Calix Major (Great Chalice) of Leo III. is richly adorned, along with many others in subsequent times, of the same costly material. We have, too, cups of bronze, and pewter, and ivory. Some with, some without handles: some plain, some with carvings and inscriptions; down to our own conventional, and apparently now universally accepted cups of unchased silver. In the use of these we believe, after all, we are only reverting to the frequent material, if not shape, employed in the earliest ages; surmised, where they existed, to be the gifts of the wealthiest members. A similar diversity may be traced in regard to the Salver, or Paten, used for the Communion Bread. Of these some were oblong, circular, hexagonal, octagonal, some gold and silver, some of coloured and uncoloured glass: alabaster, bronze. Sometimes plain, sometimes ornamented with gems, or carved with religious symbols. While these

pages are preparing for the press, an interesting article has appeared in the public papers from the pen of M. Ganneau, one of the most distinguished and reliable of Christian archæologists. His paper consists of a detailed account of all the more important results of the Palestine Exploration Society, in which from the first he has taken a deep personal interest. The following, with reference to "a Votive Paten discovered on the Mount of Olives," is given in his own words:—"On the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives there has been found an interesting specimen of Christian archæology. The Archimandrite of the Russian mission at Jerusalem, into the possession of which it has entered, has kindly sent me a 'squeeze' and a copy, which have enabled me to interpret it. It is a disc of greenish bronze thirteen centimetres in diameter, mounted on a kind of little foot. In the middle a large cross is cut with equal branches, on which are engraved five characters, thus arranged:—

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which I read ΦΩs, Ζωή, 'life, light,' those two sacred words, denoting the two essential qualities of Christ. All round there is engraved a long Greek inscription. . . . I believe that this little object represents to us a paten—the *diskos* of the Greek Church, on which were placed the portions of the eucharistic bread, the 'living coal' (compare 'life, light') to which the Oriental liturgies liken this symbol of the body of Jesus."

The occasional magnificent costly ornamentation of "the Communion Plate" above described, was doubtless connected with the superstitious transmutation and deification of the elements: and the 101st canon of the Trullan Council (A.D. 692) reprehends the practice (though not on Protestant grounds). At the same time it may be added, that this lavish wealth in precious metals and jewels may have had, with some, a more reasonable explanation:—viz, the principle, in regard to the vessels of the sanctuary, of honouring God by giving to Him the choicest and costliest. Just, as in a very much smaller, but equally significant form, which occurs to the writer. In one or more parishes in the south-west of Scotland the practice has long lingered, of administering the Bread of the Sacrament, not with ordinary, but with what is familiarly known as "short-bread;" arising doubtless from the same impelling motive of giving the Master of the Feast the best. —It shows the power of traditional 'use and wont' in holy things; that when, some years ago, in the case just mentioned, the attempt was

made to assimilate with the ordinary usage elsewhere, the alteration was resented and opposed ; and we believe the immemorial habit—though singular—remains in use to this day.

This somewhat long Appendix may be appropriately closed with the remark, that despite of all the diversities—the painful diversities—in the method of observance, as well as in the sacramental theory itself, unfolded in the immediately preceding pages,—surely one singular and noteworthy fact is, the continuity, for more than 1800 years, in the celebration of the Sacred Ordinance : indeed ever since the memorable night of its Institution by the Divine Founder. “The Roman Empire,” says an eloquent writer, “over which Augustus ruled supreme, has passed away. The era of the irruption of the new races upon its ruins has come and gone. The vast dominions of Charlemagne have been broken up. The darkness of the middle ages has been dispelled. The epoch of the Renaissance has gone by. The era of the Reformation is over. Political systems have been established and overthrown. New worlds have been discovered. The very languages which were spoken throughout the Roman Empire in the days of Augustus have given place to others. Habits, manners, modes of thought, theories, opinions, philosophies, have changed. But this Rite still survives.” [Dr. MacLear, ‘Evidential Value of the Holy Eucharist,’ p. 46, 7. The Boyle Lectures for 1879.]

The same sentiment is enshrined in Dean Stanley’s “Hymn on the Lord’s Supper :”—

“ Years have past : in every clime,
Changing with the change of time,
Varying through a thousand forms,
Torn by factions, rocked by storms ;
Still the Sacred Table spread,
Flowing cup and broken bread,
With that parting word agree,
Drink and eat, REMEMBER ME ! ”

THE END.

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